THE FUNCTION OF THE SCIENCE FICTION ELEMENT IN THE NOVELS OF KURT VONNEGUT, JR.

by Michael Kokonis

A thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

Department of English
McGill University
Montréal, Québec.

August, 1979.

FUNCTION OF SCIENCE FICTION IN KURT VONNEGUT'S NOVELS.

ABSTRACT

Science fiction is a recurrent element in K. Vonnegut's fiction. By focusing on this element it is hoped that this study will arrive at a better understanding of Vonnegut's literary idiom. Of his first six novels, four are chosen as the ones that clearly contain science fiction elements: Player Piano, The Sirens of Titan, Cat's Cradle, and Slaughterhouse-Five. Specifically, this study examines the science fiction elements in these novels in order to show that they are employed as integral parts of the novels' structures for satiric purposes. A structural analysis is applied to each novel individually in which science fiction elements and devices are shown to lend themselves as vehicles for Vonnegut's satirical vision of contemporary life.

RÉSUMÉ

La science fiction est un élément récurrent dans l' oeuvre de Vonnegut. Cet ouvrage veut tenter d'exploiter cet élément de science fiction pour arriver à une meilleure compréhension du langage littéraire de l' auteur. De ses six premiers romans, quatre ont été retenus qui reprennent largement ce thème. Ils sont: Player Piano, The Sirens of Titan, Cat's Cradle, et Slaughterhouse-Five.

Plus précisement, nous reprendrons les éléments de science fiction de ces romans pour tenter de démontrer qu' ils sont intégrés dans la structure à des fins satiriques. Une analyse structurale permettra de faire ressortir ces thèmes et les techniques dont se sert Vonnegut pour véhiculer sa vision satirique de la vie contemporaine.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Peter Ohlin for his consistently good advice and counselling, his patient supervision and his stimulating insight.

I am also grateful to Mrs. Kathy Brennan and Mr. Peter Illich who gladly read the entire manuscript and provided many invaluable comments and suggestions, and to Miss Francine Langlois who kindly translated the Abstract into French.

Finally, I extend my deepest gratitude to my wife, Soula, without whose constant encouragement, enduring patience and spiritual and practical assistance this study might have not been completed.

DEDICATION

To my mother and father

and to my wife

with love.

INTRODUCTION

The hell with the talented sparrowfarts who write delicately of one small piece of one mere lifetime, when the issues are galaxies, eons, and trillions of souls yet to be born.
--Eliot Rosewater.
(Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater.)

. . . you catch people before they become generals and Senators and Presidents, and you poison their minds with humanity. Encourage them to make a better world.
--Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. ("A Talk with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.")

Vonnegut's rise to respectability came very late. As late as 1969, there were only two studies devoted exclusively to his work.[1] One of the possible reasons for his neglect by the academic critics is probably the "slick" quality of his early short stories. Another reason may be his use of science fiction in his novels. Science fiction is a recurrent element in Vonnegut's novels. Time travel, space ships, alien robots (the Tralfamadorians), gigantic computers (EPICAC XIV), and remarkable inventions (ice-nine), all these traditional science fiction characteristics are present in most of his novels. Unfortunately for him, however, the presence of science fiction in his books has caused critics to dismiss his work as "science fiction," a category of literature carrying until only recently the stigma of what T.S. Eliot once termed the "preadolescent imagination."

Vonnegut's work enjoyed a better reception by critics

of science fiction nonetheless. Notable science fiction critics such as Damon Knight, Kingsley Amis and Donald Wollheim included him in their surveys. His novels also became subject to analysis in a growing number of books and articles. When Vonnegut learned from the critics that he was a science fiction writer, he confessed: "So, I allowed this to go on, because I thought it was an honor to be printed anywhere . . ."[2] What he has objected to is the critical fallacy of assuming that if a work contains science fiction elements, it is no longer worth examining. Hence Vonnegut's preference for being called a novelist rather than a science fiction writer.

Yet, the question of science fiction in his novels remains. Does the existence of science fiction elements make him a science fiction writer? According to certain definitions of science fiction, yes. He could easily, for instance, qualify as a science fiction writer under Asimov's "social science fiction" or under the still broader term "speculative fiction." The problem with science fiction definitions, however, is that, no matter how elaborately one is constructed, it is bound to leave out some work which could otherwise be included in the genre. Therefore, whether or not Vonnegut is a science fiction writer cannot be safely decided, unless a widely-accepted definition is established. Suffice it to accept at the present time Damon Knight's credo that "science fiction is a field of literature worth taking seriously, and that ordinary, critical standards

can be meaningfully applied to it: e.g., originality, sincerity, style, construction, logic, coherence, sanity, garden-variety grammar."[3]

All the same, even as a science fiction writer, Vonnegut has always caused uneasiness to the critics of the field. Some critics, like Sam Moskowitz or H. Bruce Franklin, think that Vonnegut's science fiction is not good enough because he has not been willing to learn his trade in the pulps and he still "needs discipline, practice, and considerably less smugness . . . ."[4] Donald Wollheim, moreover, observes a uniqueness and a subtle complexity in Vonnegut's novels, since, unlike other science fiction authors, he ". . . apparently does not seem to take his science fiction elements with that deadly seriousness that so many of our regulars do."[5] Finally, Brian Aldiss also finds it difficult to accept him as a regular science fiction writer. He admits that "Vonnegut harps on science fiction, its themes and characters, while denying he writes anything of the kind." But he goes on to imply that Vonnegut is really one of those "mainstream" writers, who come to the science fiction field, "make their contribution" and "speed out" as soon as they have "the cash for the gasoline."[6]

The contention of all these critics is that although Vonnegut may be a science fiction writer, he is somehow different. Perhaps his difference from, or similarity to other science fiction writers is most simply summarized by Tim Hildebrand:

> The difference between Vonnegut and science fiction writers is that Vonnegut is essentially a preacher, a moralist, a man with a message. Most science fiction writers concentrate on ideas, not people. Vonnegut's people orientation has led him to develop a supersense of irony that sets his consciousness apart from that of the typical science fiction writer. But both Vonnegut and science fiction writers are interested in how technology changes the world.[7]

Hildebrand's argument sets out the two basic topics of this study. The first is Vonnegut's similarity with other science fiction writers, that is, his interest in the impact of technology upon people, which is best expressed through the forms of science fiction. The second, his difference from them, is his interest in creating a unique satire. The main objective of this study, therefore, is to examine the role science fiction plays in the satirical structure of each novel.

Before continuing with the analysis, however, it is necessary to clarify how these two terms will be used. By "form of science fiction" is meant the mold or type in which typical science fiction stories have appeared through the time. How the form of the developing genre has changed over the years is discussed in certain places, in Isaac Asimov's "Social Science Fiction,"[8] as well as in the Introduction to The Mirror of Infinity[9] by Robert Silverberg, for example. The form has progressed from the "scientific romances" of Jules Verne and H.G.Wells, to the puerile "gadget" or "adventure" science fiction of the Gernsback era, through the more sophisticated and "scientific" Campbell period, to the

socially oriented science fiction of post war times. Of course, the term still remains vague, due to the protean-like character of the genre. However, there are certain characteristics which are always present in stories traditionally considered to belong to the genre. According to Wollheim, these characteristics break science fiction into four major categories: Imaginary Voyages, Future Predictions, Remarkable Inventions and Social Satire[10] (usually presenting Utopian or Anti-Utopian Worlds.) Any science fiction story must have one or a combination of these characteristics which determines the form in which the story is written. The term, therefore, will be used in the light of these four classifications of science fiction.

As far as the other term is concerned, that of satire, it is an abstraction equally hard to define. This is mainly due to the difficulty of discussing satire as if it were a single, simple, uniform genre. Satire is often undistinguishable from other literary genres because it has the tendency to adopt whatever literary form appears convenient for the creation of satiric effect. As Matthew Hodgart indicates, "any literary form will serve, provided that it permits the characteristic combination of aggressive attack and fantastic travesty, and gives the satirist freedom to use some or all of the essential techniques of satire."[11] In the "Mythos of Winter" Northrop Frye defines the hazy boundaries of satire by invective on one end (attack without humor, or pure denunciation) to humor, or pure fantasy on the other.[12] Theo-

reticians also point out that satire and comedy often overlap and the best way to distinguish them is on the basis of their goals and tone. Satire is usually characterized by its "intent to reform" while comedy's goal is mere acceptance. However, this distinction is not always easy to make because certain satirists do not offer clear normative standards against which satire's vice and folly are to be judged and leave the reader with an unclear view of the author's attitude. It is, therefore, imperative to apply a rhetorical analysis to a satiric work if one is to discover how the satire works. Maynard Mack in his essay "The Muse of Satire" calls attention to one basic technique of satire. The general plan of a satire always two layers: "There is a thesis layer attacking vice and folly, elaborated with every kind of rhetorical device, and, much briefer, an antithesis layer illustrating or implying a philosophy or rational control, usually embodied in some more or less ideal norm like the stoic vir bonus, the good plain man," or what is otherwise called a persona. Except for the vir bonus, the good man who reacts to evil with common good sense, there are other kinds of personae such as the naif or the ingénu type who reacts with the bewilderment of innocence; and finally, the hero, or public defender, who attacks evil with a vehement rage.[13]

Some satirists, however, use this technique in peculiar ways. Thomas Wymer indicates how Swift's persona in "A Modest Proposal" and "A Tale of a Tub" embodies not an ideal

norm but one of an opposing extreme which is equally fallacious. The trap that readers of Swift easily fall into, Wymer says, is the same for the readers of Vonnegut: it is "the failure to perceive the irony of the antithesis." In Vonnegut, the diversity of critical opinions concerning the author's identification with Billy Pilgrim and his Tralfamadorian solution illustrates this problem. Wymer's classification of the possible critical responses to this question is very accurate.[14] Thus, according to him, one category of critics perceive the thesis layer (the apparent subject of Vonnegut's satire) but accept the antithesis layer as the valid norm. Willis E. McNelly, David Goldsmith, Glenn Meeter and John Somer accept the Tralfamadorian solution as the right one and maintain that it is adopted by the author too.[15]

Another category includes critics who may accept the antithesis layer as the author's position but find that position either inadequate or puerile. Tony Tanner, for example, is much aware of what Vonnegut is doing but cannot help stating his misgivings with the hope that Vonnegut will share them. Alfred Kazin finds the space fiction "too droll" for his taste ". . . a boy's fantasy of more rational creatures than ourselves."[16]

There is a third group of critics who see both thesis and antithesis as deliberately ironic, but attribute this to the author's hopelessness. Jerry Bryant finds in Slaughterhouse-Five "a confusion of attitude, a failure to make clear

the author's position." Max Schulz analyses Vonnegut as a Black Humorist, whose great virtue is "his willingness to resist the temptation to formulate any answers." Charles Harris also reads Vonnegut as a novelist of the Absurd. Robert Scholes places him in a category of his own, "fabulation," and sees his novels as representing a kind of stoic comedy of acceptance of the world's condition. Finally, Jean E. Kennard says that Vonnegut "has the look of the satirist but has no answers to give us." Generally, all the critics of this category aspire to the existential view that Vonnegut projects a pluralistic universe while carafully refraining from any normative judgements.[17]

A fourth approach has only recently been applied and has been the most successful. The explanations of Vonnegut attempted by the critics of this last category are far more accurate mainly because their approach is based on close textual analysis. John Tilton shows why Vonnegut does not share Billy's Tralfamadorian attitude. James Goshorn demonstrates how Vonnegut's satire is distinguished from comedy or black humor, and how it manages, "largely through indirection, to create a concern in the reader for values and for humane treatment of human beings." Goshorn correctly compares Vonnegut's satire in tone and quality to that of Voltaire but he is not right to exclude any Swftian influences. Thomas Wymer shows how Vonnegut uses Swiftian techniques as well.[18]

The term satire, therefore, is going to be used in the

present thesis in light of these critical studies. Vonnegut's satire is quietistic and low-key, formed by a combination of modern elements and traditional techniques, which, without positing any moral absolutes (as befits our contemporary age of relativism) manages to elicit positive responses from his readers.

The body of this text, however, is mainly concerned with the role of science fiction in Vonnegut's novels, in an attempt to show how science fiction works as a part of satire. The majority of the critics agree that Vonnegut's aim is not merely the creation of science fiction novels, but that science fiction is a means rather than an end in itself. Gary Wolfe writes that "science fiction, when considered in terms of literary values (as it must be with Vonnegut) is at best a device through which the author speaks and which provides him with the necessary metaphor for his vision."[19] James Lundquist, who devotes a lengthy discussion to the effect of science fiction on Vonnegut, asserts that "Vonnegut uses science fiction as a means of transmitting his vision, a vision that, because of its cosmically ironic implications, demands the intergalactic scope that science fiction affords."[20] Finally, Goshorn comments that "the fantasy and science fiction elements in Vonnegut's novels work as ironic reflectors on the conventional realistic elements so as to create an essentially comic contrast of fantasy and reality which marks the unique tone of the novels."[21] Yet, there has not been in print up to now any complete study with a

focus on the function of science fiction in Vonnegut's novels. Goshorn comes closer than any other critic but touches upon the subject tangentially, his main concern being the discussion of satire in the novels.

To examine all of Vonnegut's novels in this space would be impossible. Since the first six novels are considered by critics as a unified body of work,[22] the analysis could be limited to these first six novels. However, Mother Night and God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, although they are said to be part of Vonnegut's fantasy world, are excluded from the discussion because they do not conform to the science fiction definition set as a standard in this thesis. Therefore, the novels to be examined are: Player Piano, The Sirens of Titan, Cat's Cradle and Slaughterhouse-Five. Each chapter will deal sepapately with one of these novels. In every chapter the discussion will begin with the examination of the science fiction form and will continue in an attempt to show how science fiction combines with the satirical and novelistic elements in the whole structure of each novel. In order to clarify the underlying art of structure and style that distinguishes Vonnegut's work, satirical techniques and fictional devices will be closely considered. In addition, there will be brief comments on Vonnegut's evolutionary experimentation and innovative techniques from novel to novel.

NOTES

[1] Charles B. Harris, "Notes and References," Chapter Three, Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd (New Haven, Conn.: College and Univ. Press, 1971), p. 139. The two studies cited by Harris are: Robert Scholes, "Mithridates, He Died Old: Black Humor and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.," Hollins Critics, iii, vi, 1-12, rpt in Scholes' The Fabulators (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 35-55. Carlo Pagètti, "Kurt Vonnegut, tra fantascienza e utopia," Studi Americani, xii (1968), 307-22.

[2] This quotation is cited by Stanley Schatt in Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Boston: Twayne, 1976), p. 18. From John Casey, "Interview with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.," in Apocalypse: Dominant Contemporary Forms, ed. Joe David Bellamy (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972), p. 382.

[3] Damon Knight, In Search of Wonder (Chicago: Advent, 1967), p. 2.

[4] Sam Moskowitz, Seekers of Tomorrow, (New York: Ballantine, 1967), pp. 419-20, thinks of Vonnegut as "excellent raw material unfortunate enough to get started in the better magazines instead of learning his trade in the pulps. He needs discipline, practice and considerably less smugness. . . ." Also, H. Bruce Franklin, "Fiction of Science," The Southern Review, 3 (Autumn 1967), 1036-49, reviewing Player Piano, finds it "shallow and amateurish" and remarks that

"[it] might have been a splendid short story if Vonnegut had been willing to learn the artistry of modern science fiction, particularly future-scene science fiction . . . ."

[5] Donald Wollheim, The Universe Makers: Science Fiction Today (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 71.

[6] Brian W. Aldiss, Billion Year Spree: The Time History of Science Fiction (New York: Doubleday, 1973), pp. 315-6.

[7] Tim Hildebrand, "Two or Three Things I Know About Kurt Vonnegut's Imagination," The Vonnegut Statement, ed. J. Klinkowitz & J. Somer (New York: Dell, 1973), p. 128.

[8] In his article "Social Science Fiction," Turning Points, ed. D. Knight (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 21-61, Isaak Asimov describes four periods in the development of science fiction. He makes the point that social change reflects itself in literature, particularly in science fiction.

[9] Robert Silverberg, The Mirror of Infinity (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), in the introduction gives a description of the genre's course from Wells' s visionary and imaginative fiction, through a long detour into trashiness in the 30's and back towards literary respectability again.

[10] Donald Wollheim, pp. 15-16.

[11] Matthew Hodgart, Satire (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 132.

[12] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 224-25.

[13] Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire," Yale Review, 41 (1951), 80-91, rpt in Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 190-201. Quotation cited from p. 194.

[14] Thomas L. Wymer, "The Swiftian Satire of Kurt Vonnegut Jr.," Voice for the Future: Essays on Major Science Fiction Writers, ed. Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1976), p. 240. I follow Wymer's meticulous account of the critical responses to this question.

[15] Willis McNelly, "Science Fiction, The Modern Mythology: Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five," SF: The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction, ed. Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1971), pp. 193-4. McNelly considers science fiction as an objective correlative, enabling us to face problems we cannot otherwise face directly; David H. Goldsmith, Kurt Vonnegut: Fantasist of Fire and Ice, Popular Writers Series No. 2 (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Press, 1972); Glenn Meeter, "Vonnegut's Formal and Moral Otherworldliness: Cat's Cradle and Slaughterhouse-Five," in The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 204-20; John Somer, "Geodesic Vonnegut: Or, If Buckminster Fuller Wrote Novels," in The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 221-54. Somer believes that Vonnegut has created with Billy a hero "with a deep understanding of the universe," whose Tralfamadorian vision "en-

ables him to live in this world and yet transcend it at the same time . . . ."

[16] Tony Tanner, "The Uncertain Messenger: A Study of the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.," Critical Quarterly, 11 (1969), 297-315, rpt. in Tanner, City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); and Alfred Kazin, "The War Novel: From Mailer to Vonnegut," Saturday Review, (6 Feb., 1971), 13-15, rpt. in Kazin, Bright Book of Life (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971).

[17] Jerry H. Bryant, The Open Decision (New York: The Free Press, 1970), pp. 303-24; Max F. Schulz, Black Humor Fiction of the Sixties: A Pluralistic Definition of Man and His World (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 43-66; Harris, pp. 51-75. Harris says that Vonnegut's tone suggests the hopelessness of the human condition and the resignation he feels is necessary to express that hopelessness; Scholes, The Fabulators, pp. 35-55; Finally, Jean E. Kennard, Number and Nightmare: Forms of Fantasy in Contemporary Fiction (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975), pp. 101-28.

[18] John W. Tilton, Cosmic Satire in the Contemporary Novel (London: Associated Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 69-103. Tilton's study is limited only to Slaughterhouse-Five; James W. Goshorn, "The Queasy World of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." (Ph.D. dissertation, The Univ. of New Mexico, 1971); Thomas Wymer, pp. 238-62. All three critics apply a rhetorical approach to the analyses of the novels.

[19] Gary K. Wolfe, "Vonnegut and the Metaphor of Science Fiction: The Sirens of Titan," Journal of Popular Culture, 4 (Spring, 1972), 964-69.

[20] James Lundquist, Kurt Vonnegut (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1977), p. 86.

[21] Goshorn, p. 25.

[22] Jerome Klinlowitz and John Somer, eds., The Vonnegut Statement. Klinkowitz refers to Somer's article about Vonnegut's work as a whole: ". . . the novels from 1952 to 1969 are not only of interest in their own right, but also dramatize the growth of Vonnegut's powerful and tormented imagination, his maturing grasp of the Dresden experience, and his technical innovations necessary for its artistic manifestation;" p. 16.

CHAPTER ONE

Player Piano: Of Men and Machines

> If only it weren't for the people, the goddamned people, always getting tangled up in the machinery. If it weren't for them, earth could be an engineer's paradise.
>
> --Ed Finnerty.
> (Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Player Piano)

Player Piano, more than any other of Vonnegut's novels, is written in the form of anti-utopia. Among the major anti-utopias, as a literary phenomenon of the twentieth century, Mark Hillegas lists such works of science fiction as E.M. Forster's The Machine Stops, E. Zamiatin's We, Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, and G. Orwell's 1984.[1] Vonnegut himself has candidly admitted his indebtedness to Huxley's novel: "I cheerfully ripped off the plot of Brave New World whose plot had been cheerfully ripped off from Eugene Zamiatin's We."[2]

Critical response to Player Piano varies. Some critics argue that it "is one of the best science fiction novels ever written."[3] Others find it weak in certain respects and definitely inferior to Vonnegut's other books.[4] Most of the critics, however, agree that it is a brilliant satire on contemporary America, modern society, human relationships, religion and politics. Its particular target is the dominance of machines over man and the peculiar fascination of man for

machinery.

In this chapter the objective is to show how science fiction elements combine with novelistic techniques and how this blend of fantasy and fiction provides stimulation of concern for human values in the reader. To do this in an orderly manner, the discussion will at first focus on the form of anti-utopia and its inherent possibilities for social criticism and satire.

Next, the novelistic elements of the work such as plot, major themes, characterization, the narrator's role and stylistic techniques will be considered in relation to satirical structures and rhetorical devices in order to identify the subjects and tone of the satire. Occasionally, there will be some comments on Vonnegut's literary technique, so that it will be possible to estimate his literary development in later novels.

Novels which belong to the respectable genre of the anti-utopia are usually similar to each other because each in its own way presents a nightmarish state where people are deprived of their dignity and freedom, ties with the past are cut and man is isolated from nature. Usually the cause for this is a tremendous development in science and technology, which, instead of improving the quality of life, is usurped by a totalitarian state with complete control over its citizens.

Such works have been often called dystopias or cacotopias--as opposed to eutopia, "the ideal place"[5]--but their

most usual name is anti-utopia because they represent a counter reaction to a long strain of Utopias from Plato's Republic to Bellamy's Looking Backward, works depicting a planned, idealized, perfected society. Hillegas provides two possible reasons for the appearence of the anti-utopia. One may be cultural and political. Writers have perceived the possibility of Utopia approaching, but in the form of totalitarian governments, planned economies and huge bureaucracies which are phenomena exclusive to the twentieth century. Another reason is the influence of Wells on these writers:

> To an extraordinary degree the great anti-utopias are both continuations of the imagination of H.G. Wells and reactions against that imagination. At the same time they often attack ideas that Wells championed, in many cases ideas which were in turn a protest against the decaying Victorian order of things.[6]

The anti-utopian novels, at least the ones discussed here, are distinguished from the bad science fiction that appeared in the early novels and pulp magazines by their superior literary quality and their significant comment on human values. According to Hillegas, "'quality' science fiction such as is presented by the great anti-utopias always makes a significant comment on human life: usually it is a vehicle for social criticism and satire."[7] One such novel, Hillegas asserts, is Vonnegut's "brilliantly satiric" Player Piano.

As a work of science fiction, Player Piano conforms to two of Wollheim's classifications: "Future Predictions" and "Social Satire." The definition that Wollheim provides for the category of "Future Predictions" is that

> [it] covers stories that tell you what could be happening to mankind tomorrow or in the next century or a million years from now . . . . Mainly, it tends to involve genuine accounts of what could happen if such and such a trend or potential continues or comes to pass. Utopias are a variety of this . . . as well as wars to come, or plagues, or famines.[8]

In other words, this category represents stories which deal with logical extrapolations of current situations to their future conclusions. In Player Piano Vonnegut extrapolates the development of computers and the automation of machines in a not too distant future. A certain development in electronics results in the perfection of automatic control over machines which brings forth the "Second Industrial Revolution." With the perfection of automation, the machines can provide immense productivity with almost no manpower. Better products are produced at a faster rate for the lowest cost. And then, with the "Third Industrial Revolution"--the development of the thinking machines--life changes even more radically. People need work neither with their hands nor even with their brains. The machines provide everything and also make managerial decisions for the fair distribution of goods.

One does not have to cover many pages, however, to realize that Vonnegut's main concern is not the technological sophistication and achievements of the future. His basic aim is to comment on contemporary society rather than to describe the wonders of the future. As Peter Reed remarks, ". . . the America described in the book resembles the one

we live in, and we quickly realize that what Vonnegut wants to tell us about is not so much the future as the present. For the future we are shown derives from the present we know through direct extension or extrapolation."[9] Thus Player Piano falls into "Social Satire," another of Wollheim's classifications. A characteristic of this category, Wollheim points out, is that it usually merges with any of the other classifications, but it is also a class by itself whenever the writer's motivation is present:

> The intent is to hold a mirror to the present, by means of the future or of an imaginary land, and thereby either makes fun, a dire prediction, a somber warning, or a healthy look at where we are all going and What Does It All Mean . . . . In Social Satire, science fiction becomes the means to an end but it is not the end itself, as it may be in any of the previous classifications.[10]

With the future world of Player Piano, then, Vonnegut is holding "a mirror to the present," to a situation he was able to notice as a public relations man with General Electric at Schenectady in 1949. He confesses in an interview:

> Player Piano was my response to the implication of having everything run by little boxes. The idea of doing that, you know, made perfect sense. To have a little clicking box make all the decisions wasn't a vicious thing to do. But it was too bad for human beings who get their dignity from their jobs.[11]

The form of the anti-utopia employed in Player Piano is a very suitable vehicle for his satiric purposes. Anti-utopia as a genre is generally a means for satire since by its nature it is a critique on Wellsian ideas (though not neces-

sarily through direct influence by Wells). Hillegas maintains that Player Piano "is the most Wellsian--or anti-Wellsian-- because it presents . . . a final critique of the Wellsian dream of a society run by an elite of functional people, i.e. managers and engineers, as well as a final critique of the Wellsian love of machines and efficiency."[12]

Vonnegut's technique in this novel is to present the future world as an ideal one and then progressively to undermine this idea by showing that it is actually a nightmare. This is the standard technique of any anti-utopia. Matthew Hodgart indicates the difference between a utopia and an anti-utopia. Technically, he maintains, "the utopia makes criticism of the irrational present-day world by offering a rational contrast; the anti-utopia is a grotesque vision of our world in the guise of a logical extrapolation."[13] Player Piano clearly belongs to the second case. From the outset, Ilium looks like an earthly paradise. The results of automation are amazing. Without having to work, people enjoy all the necessities of life and some modest luxuries. The problem of poverty has been solved once and for all. People live in security, with guaranteed annual medical care and income. The narrator remarks at one point that "the world really [is] cleared of the unnatural terrors--mass starvation, mass imprisonment, mass torture, mass murder."[14] As Chad Walsh puts it, "at first glance, it mounts up to an authentic utopia."[15]

Soon, however, it becomes evident that this is only a

guise for the "woeful implications of computerization." What seems to be "an authentic utopia" holds true only for people with an IQ higher than 140. For all the other people, although the practical problems of life have been solved, there remains the basic problem of how to live. The people live in spiritual squalor having been replaced by machines. The only consolation for the great masses is make-believe jobs, such as the Reclamation and Reconstruction Corps or the Army. Their life is meaningless and boring. The elite of managers and engineers with higher IQ's is blind to the artificiality of their "utopia." Though they enjoy a luxurious life and prestige from their high social status, they are eventually faced with the anxiety of tomorrow. The very nature of the system is such that it requires from them higher and higher standards. With blind devotion to machines they keep on perfecting new models thus unwittingly eliminating themselves from their own jobs, as is the case with Bud Calhoun. As the machines become better and better fewer people are needed to work. The ultimate irony of this system is that it is left to the machines to decide the people's fate. The computers decide how many people are eligible to work and who those persons will be. The selection is based on their IQ's and their "Achievement and Aptitude Profile" tests. The cruelty of the system is depicted in the grotesque inversion of the role between people and machines. Where men are measured in their competitive struggle against machines, they are sure to lose. "As an old, old joke had it," the narrator com-

ments, "the machines had all the cards." (77)

To appreciate, however, how Vonnegut puts this form to use in his critique of a mechanized society, it is imperative to examine in greater detail the narrative structure and the other literary elements of the novel. The narrative structure of Player Piano is simple compared to the complicated time structures and fragmented plots of his later novels. The action here unfolds in the conventional, realistic mode of representation based on cause and effect relationships, with the exception, as one critic observes, of a rather exaggerated scene at the end of the novel (the absurdity of the action during the rebels' riot).[16] The main action centers around Paul Proteus, the protagonist of the novel. But attached to the Proteus plot are several subplots and digressions which deal with the stories of secondary characters such as the Shah of Bratpuhr, Edgar R.B. Hagstrohm, private Elmo Hacketts and Dr. Ewing Halyard. Peter Reed finds certain inconsistencies in the development of the central character and in the way that the Proteus plot is connected with the subplots and says that these weaken the unity of the novel. Reed, however, is too sensitive a reader not to suspect that this is not due to authorial incompetence. He hints that Vonnegut may be consciously using the subplots and digressions towards a more episodic structure which is part of the satirist's technique:

> These things weaken Player Piano as a novel. On the other hand, they are things which probably contribute to the book's success in what it does

> best--present a broadly satirical view enlivened by comic episode, fanciful invention and suspense.[17]

It will be demonstrated that the particular structure of the main plot amd its subplots is a very useful means for the "broadly satirical view" of America that Vonnegut creates in the novel. It must be stated, however, that one can perceive two kinds of satire in the book. One is the specific satire directed against particular targets, while the other is of a more general kind directed against common traits of society.

The specific satire is created mainly in the central plot by the dramatization of basic values through the thematic structures and the action of the story. The main target is the dehumanization of man in a mechanized country and his incurable fascination with machinery. The general type of satire, which may be termed "Social Satire," is found both in the main plot (particularly in its digressions) and in the subplots and their digressions.

In the main plot, for example, disparate social traits are criticized, which, though they may have no direct relation to the plot, help complete the picture of the society described. These are actually common situations existing in our society and they are parodied with a slight exaggeration in the book. Such situations are the daytime soap operas reflecting the average social milieu (the family with the low IQ's); or the big business of college football which has nothing to do with education anymore; the parody of suburban life with glamorous country-club upper-class echelons and

cocktail parties; ambitious wives (Anita) feigning affection for higher social climbing; the one-upmanship attitudes and jargon of the elite.

The subplots with their digressions, on the other hand, help to support the main themes dramatized in the central plot. At the same time, they sustain both the specific and the broader social satire. The subplot of the Shah of Bratpuhr, for example, with his visits to different parts of the States offers numerous sources for an additional attack on the machine-versus-man idea. The visit of the Shah is equivalent to that of "the visitor from another planet" because he suggests a totally different point of view of American society not only to the characters of the novel but to the reader as well. Much of the irony in the Shah-subplot comes from the contrast between two cultures, one highly sophisticated, the other primitive and simple, as the Shah translates everything he sees in terms of his own country. At the same time, these episodes reveal general aspects of the political, military and cultural life in America which add to the social satire of the main plot.

The basic concern in this study, however, is to show how the novel employs the science fiction motifs and the anti-utopia conventions to demonstrate how far society has already gone on the wrong path. Therefore, it is important to trace the science fiction elements in the discussion of novelistic and satirical devices.

First of all, there is a large number of images which

emphasize the futuristic and mechanical aspects of the world presented. The huge Ilium Works occupying one third of the city, and the elaborate description of the machines and their functions is but one example. Other images of technological marvels are the robot sweeper which disposes of the cat early in the novel; "Checker Charley," the world's champion checker player robot; Bud Calhoun's sophisticated gadgets (his fully automatic car included); electronic, ultra sonic household appliances; robot helicopters; the world's greatest computer series EPICAC buried in Carlsbad Caverns; the list seems endless. Actually Vonnegut supplies enough details to suggest the world picture that is formed in the reader's imagination. These science fiction images function as part of the setting of the novel and contribute to the plausibility of the story.

Secondly, science fiction elements are also found in the motifs or themes of the story itself. Player Piano, it has been stated, shares several story characteristics with the major anti-utopias which are accepted as science fiction novels. Mark Hillegas points out that the most familiar features of the counter-Wellsian anti-utopias are also present in Player Piano:

> As usual, society is a pyramid topped by an elite, with the great mass of people faceless and nameless . . . . As usual, the elite rules with the help of a strong police force who employ the latest, most efficient means of surveillence. As usual, there is a rebellion, which, again as usual, fails. There is even a traditional escape to nature, when the hero, dreaming of a more primitive life, buys an old, unmechanized farm on which he hopes to

> live. And as usual, it pictures a machine civilization, one in which machines are replacing men.[18]

The last of these features reflects two major themes of the novel which are standard ones in most works of science fiction: man's fascination with the marvels of technology and, as a consequence, man's mechanization and dehumanization.

It is mainly these ideas which, as they are dramatized in the story and as they are manipulated by the author's satiric techniques, become the subject matter of satire. The incursion of machines into man's life has caused an inversion of roles between man and machine, aptly symbolized by the old player piano which gives the book its title. As Tony Tanner remarks, "a piano player is a man consciously using a machine to produce aesthetically pleasing patterns of his own making. A player piano is a machine which has been programmed to produce music on its own thus making the human presence redundant."[19]

In the electronic utopia of Player Piano, the machines have deprived men not only of their skills but also of their right to decide about their way of living and their future. People have lost their dignity, pleasure and happiness that derives from creativity and feel utterly useless and purposeless. Even those who still retain their jobs are engaged in a ruthless competition with machines and live with the constant fear that they will be soon replaced.

James Goshorn suggests three different thematic subcategories in a complete, systematic analysis that covers all possible ways in which Vonnegut displays the degree of

machine dominance in this society: sex (the relationship between two individuals), "grex," (the relationship between individual and group), and "art and ontology," (the existential need to create values and act upon them).[20]

In Player Piano sex is used on the individual level to reveal the degree to which mechanization has permeated human life. Sex has been very often used as a topic of satire. Here, it is treated in such ways that it helps to depict the inversion of roles between man and machine, thus providing ample ammunition for authorial ironic comments.

The machines of the Ilium Works are depicted with human characteristics: "mechanical hands," ". . . welding heads," ". . . electric eyes," ". . . gaping jaws." Moreover, the human image of the machines is further accentuated through Paul's imagination: they appear to him to practice "precision calisthenics," "ballet choreography," or orchestrated symphony music.

Vonnegut often implies that a sensual relationship has been developed between man and machine. For example, hopeless Reeks and Wrecks, who strive to find an opportunity to do something useful with their hands, rush to repair Paul's car with excessive zeal. They repair "her" in almost no time. The Orange-O machine that the rebels reconstruct towards the end of the book is also referred to as a "she" by the excited workers. James Mellard points out that the machine "has become decidedly feminine--a 'she' into which one pushes nickels and which lights up reassuringly when its

needs are satisfied."[21] The narrator's ironic comment makes the same suggestion: he refers to the Orange-O machine as an "excretor of . . . blended wood pulp, dye, water, and orange-type flavoring," which was "as popular as a nymphomaniac at an American Legion convention." (318) Therefore, sex is employed here as a magnifying lens for focusing on human deviation; it helps to call attention to the grotesque distortion of man's sensuality being projected into something completely mechanical like the Orange-O machine, or, as in the case of manager Garth, into a "corporate organization with an anthropomorphic image;"

> Garth stood in relation to that image as a lover and Paul wondered if this prevalent type of relationship had ever been given the consideration it deserved by sexologists . . . . In short, Garth suffered all the emotional hazards of a perennial game of she-loves-me, she-loves-me not. To carry out decisions from above--an irritating business for Paul--was for Garth, a favor to please a lady. (127)

On the other hand, mechanization and computerization has affected human traits and this is mostly evident in the characters' personal relationships. Anita is very machine-like in her life generally and in her relationship with Paul. Finnerty attacks her disturbingly systematic ways with the suggestion that she can be easily replaced by a machine, "stainless steel, covered with sponge rubber and heated electrically to 98.6 degrees." (46) The refrain sentences "I love you, Paul,"--"I love <u>you</u>, Anita," repeated as if on "an electronic circuit," characterize very effectively the mechanical aspect of the love relationship between Paul and Anita.

Furthermore, on several occasions the characters' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life is expressed through their sexual lives. As the narrator ironically comments, Anita gets a sexual satisfaction from Paul's promotion as head manager to Pittsburg: "Anita slept--utterly satisfied, not so much by Paul as by the social orgasm of, after years of the system's love play, being offered Pittsburg." (133) Paul is deluded about his role in the system as well as about his role as a husband. His impulse to escape to the Gottwald farm illustrates his delusion. He hopes that he can re-educate Anita and they can both live a natural life in that idyllic place. He soon realizes, however, that this is only a dream. Products of a mechanical society, they would both be unable to adapt to the new environment. Later on, when his perspective on things changes, he also rejects Anita's mechanical sex. Her "sexual genius" does not lure him to return home from the jail. And his rejection of his former values is dramatized in his dream through a balletic enactment: Paul dances to the "Building 58 Suite," the hectic rhythm of machines and moves away from his "Mechanical Brides," that is, the machines, his wife, and the corporation represented by Kroner and Shepherd. (270-71)

For Edgar R.B. Hagstrohm, "the average man," an extramarital sexual relationship is an escape from a boring and dissatisfying life. The extramarital affair is for the two lovers, the narrator says, "like a bright, fat cherry on the grey mush of their lives." (157)

Another source of Vonnegut's satire is found on the level of the individual's interactions with groups. In Player Piano there are two such groups and Vonnegut depicts them in a satirical light, basically by showing that the values on which their existence depends are false.

First, there is the corporate organization with the powerful Elite (which Hillegas mentions) of the managers and engineers. The satire derives from their nearsightedness to the cruelty of the system they themselves have created. Their rigidly structured, deterministic and mechanical organization requires total submission of everybody's individuality. Everybody is expected to contribute to further perfection of machines but when the machines replace them nobody complains and everybody accepts it passively. The machines gain more and more dominance over man to the point of making decisions for them. Americans still think of their country as a democracy but it is actually a transparently masked totalitarian system where the dictators are the machines.

People are forced by the elite into a specific worldview through the projection of an ideology. The major issue of this ideology is that "whatever men do, machines can do better." Since the system is based on this axiom, it is regarded as a utopia that needs no more perfection. Therefore, there can be no questioning of values; a strong police force with powerful means of surveillance and strict antisabotage laws makes sure of that.

The ideology which stresses the superiority of machine

over man has so much permeated people's minds that they sympathize with machines rather than with people. For example, when the checker player robot breaks down having been tampered with by Finnerty, there is a grand commotion among the engineers who watch the game. Everybody from the highest echelons of the Elite to the homely Reeks and Wrecks shows a tendency to serve the machines, to repair them, to create new, more efficient models. Thus, the basic satirical target against technology in the novel is "the peculiarly American mentality . . . of the restless, erratic insight and imagination of a gadgeteer." Among numerous examples of this is the case of Bud Calhoun who, as the talented engineer he is, invents a better machine model that replaces himself and a hundred others. Vonnegut, using the utopian framework, actually attacks the American gadget-mania of today,--the delight men find in producing tools which eventually take away man's pleasures.

So far the reader is led to believe that satire is solely directed against technology. But with the examination of the opposite group in the novel, the rebellious Ghost Shirt Society, it becomes obvious that Vonnegut investigates the deep roots of the problem in human nature.

As it usually happens in an anti-utopia, there is a rebellion of the oppressed people. The mediocre people of Homestead revolt but with no success. The revolt fails as the men, after destroying all the machines, start rebuilding them affectionately. The cause of the failure is lack of a counter-

ideology. The whole movement is propagated by Lasher as a social experiment. People participate as an escape from boredom, they lack self-discipline and a sincere motive for the creation of a better world. Thus the second group is derided by showing that their mentality is not much different from that of the Elite. Both groups are characterized by similar inhumanity in their tactics. They both use Paul as a pawn and force him to comply with their ideals.

The shift of target may seem puzzling, if one fails to perceive how Vonnegut's satire works. For most part of the novel the satire builds on a condemnation of machines, thus leading the reader to assume that Vonnegut means to take the side of the "little people" of Homestead. Eventually, however, this attitude is undercut by exposing the artificiality of the Ghost Shirt Society. Thus Vonnegut seems to attack everything, leaving the reader nowhere to stand. Most critics find the ending of Player Piano very pessimistic and conclude that Vonnegut refrains from giving any clear answers.

True, the novel seems to end on a pessimistic note and does not offer a direct answer. It does, nevertheless, imply one: at least one of the engineer managers has become aware of the inhumanity of the system. The problem with this society has been stated earlier in the novel by the writer's wife in the subplot with the Shah: that nobody gets maladjusted. The satire in this novel aims to correct this flaw of the society. Vonnegut's moral judge-

ment is implied in the example of Paul Proteus, who becomes "maladjusted" and reaches awareness of the humane value of being human.

The debased, artificial culture of the society depicted in the novel all but helps to awaken people. With reference to the third level of "art and ontology" we can examine the artistic climate of this society which shows that art, like every other aspect of the culture, is determined by technology.

How much popular taste in the electronic age is shaped by the technocratic hierarchy of values becomes evident in the case of the maladjusted writer. His book is rejected because it is unsuitable for any of the twelve electronically operated book clubs. It also exceeds the standards of readability quotients set up by the National Council of Arts and Letters. It is twenty seven pages too long and has a Readability Quotient of 23 instead of the accepted limit 17. When everything is mass produced with "the electronic billers, the electronic addressers, the electronic wrappers, the electronic pressers, and the electronic divident computers," it is inevitable that the writers too become "electronic," the writer's wife remarks bitterly.(231) In this fully automatic setup culture becomes ridiculously prepackaged, and cheap. Genuine art becomes an impossibility since any other "truth" than the officially established one cannot be afforded. The cultural milieu, therefore, is characterized by propaganda and cheap commercial-

ism as it is clearly revealed in the debased Indian rites and the puerile playlet of the Meadows festival.

Both the Organization and the Ghost Shirt Society draw on myths of the past to reinforce their ideology, but in both cases these traditional legends and myths become no more than empty symbols. At the Meadows, the company men use a fake Indian chief to give his blessings to the young engineers and worship an oak tree as the symbol of the Organization. The Ghost Shirt Society owes its name to an old Indian legend of an Indian tribe who believed in magical shirts that "would make them impervious and invisible to the white men's bullets." Of course they all died. Similarly, Lasher's experiment fails because it is based on an equally false system of beliefs.

The incident with the maladjusted writer, on the one hand, provides a contrast of values with the cheap commercialism of art, and on the other, it offers the chance for vigorous satire of that society. The tendency of the two groups to employ legends shows the need of people to seek a lie to believe in, since there are no true values to sustain them in an automated society. The very artificiality of their fictitious creations, however, shows the falseness of their systems and makes the actions that are based on those false values ludicrous.

With the examination of the novel's themes, the satirical subjects have been defined. In order to demonstrate, however, how the fiction of Kurt Vonnegut works as satire,

the analysis will now focus on the narrator's role, the novel's characterization and style.

The narrator's function is generally related to the question of "reality" in the novel, that is, to the way the subject matter of the novel is represented. In a satirical work, Gilbert Highet points out, the question of representation becomes one of vital importance:

> The central problem of satire is its relation to reality. Satire wishes to expose and criticize and shame human life, but it pretends to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In narrative and drama, it usually does this in one of two ways: either by showing an apparently factual but really ludicrous and debased picture of this world, or by showing a picture of another world, with which our world is contrasted.[22]

Although in later novels Vonnegut puts to use both of the techniques Highet refers to, Player Piano displays the first one. It presents "an apparently factual world," as it has already been shown, which is later twisted and stripped of its pretensions, to become a "ludicrous and debased picture of this world." This effect is achieved through the role of the narrator who is used as a reliable, omniscient persona. The presentation of the future world requires the detached perspective of the narrator to the credibility of theme and treatment. Since the novel is ostensibly set in the future, most of the information is introduced by the omniscient narrator and thus the effect of the "apparently factual world" is achieved and the reader does not doubt its plausibility.

The narrator is also reliable, since the reader can-

not trust the protagonist who is perpetually subject to illusions. Paul's symbolical name indicates the protean changes of perspective that his character undergoes, but these changes always come very late and the joke is always on him. At first he believes in a better world through engineering until the course of events makes him realize that the "golden age of computerization" is really "a frightful botsch." Then he comes to believe in the revolution with the noble intention to restore man's dignity impaired by the machines, but "ends up comically and sadly deluded;" he finally realizes that men remain basically the same, unable to learn from their sufferring. As Goshorn indicates, "the omniscient narrator hints broadly about this truth throughout the novel while the actions of the characters dramatize the fact."[23]

The narrator's function is vital in establishing the tone of the novel and the relationship between author and reader. The narrator's omniscience successfully creates the utopian perspective that helps distance the reader from his own time. Therefore, he can easily accept the author's position in attacking values and ideas with which he is not in active sympathy. This is a necessary technique of the satirist, who having captured the reader's attention and sympathy, directs him to see the fallacies in the characters' thoughts and actions. As we read further, we are drawn into accepting the ironic but also sympathetic perspective of the narrator. Were we attached to the pro-

tagonist's perspective, it would have been impossible for us to appreciate even the impact of the subplots as they reflect ironically on the main themes of the plot.

As far as the novel's characterization is concerned, there has been some difficulty in defining the realization of the protagonist's character. Paul Proteus, and to some extent the protagonist of Mother Night, seems to be an exception to Vonnegut's usual invented or type characters. To Karen and Charles Wood, Paul Proteus is "possibly the most solidly realized character in all of science fiction, and Player Piano is such a good novel, because, instead of beginning with an idea, it opens with Paul Proteus."[24] Indeed, in the first chapters Player Piano resembles the average realistic novel, introducing the characters, setting the situation, presenting the main conflict and establishing the emotional atmosphere. A man and a woman emerge with whom the reader is tempted to identify. Soon, however, the narrator's ironic attitude distances the reader from such an identification and the seemingly "realistic" treatment of the protagonist becomes a parody of the buildungsroman. Despite the frequent insights that the reader is offered into Proteus' inner self (which suggest a sympathetic attitude toward him), the protagonist remains quite a limited character and the reader is in a position to see when the joke is on Paul.

Paul's motivation is ambiguous. At one point he does not even know whether his impulse to join the revolution

stems from his genuine feelings to help a right cause or it is a subconscious drive within himself to destroy the image of his successful father haunting him. The protagonist's actions are not to be taken seriously, being under the constant undermining effect of irony. As Reed succinctly puts it,

> . . . above all, Vonnegut is obviously more interested in the actions of the whole society than of one man. One wonders if the Proteus-plot amounts to more than a vehicle for a story of a society which has reached the point of nightmare, attempts a faltering rebellion, and fails.[25]

The secondary characters, though drawn with such a fine, deft touch, are clearly types who simply reflect group characteristics. Anita, Shepherd, Baer, Kroner are different types of the Elite. Kroner, as the symbolical overtones of his name suggest, represents the rock of faith in the system; like the ancient god Kronos, he will "eat" his children in the name of order and stability: he rewards the faithful and expels the doubtful.

The dull and uninteresting life of the average man is projected through Hagstrohm and Hackett; Luke Lubbock changes identities as easily as he changes shirts; Bud Calhoun remains the restless gadgeteer to the end. And finally, the Shah of Bratpuhr embodies the satiric persona of the <u>ingénu</u> through whose naive perception the flaws of the system are magnified. Vonnegut relies much on limited, flawed characters as ironic reflectors of false beliefs. Goshorn compares them with the Jesuits or Dr. Panglos in

Voltaire's Candide: ". . . they represent positions of moral certainty based on false value hierarchies . . . the falseness of their systems is revealed by the flaws in what they do when they act on these false values."[26]

Last, Vonnegut's style must be briefly examined, since it illustrates many sides of his art. Stylistically, the novel differs from the later novels which have small chapters, fragmented plots and short sentences. Here the language is full of adverbs and complex clauses. James Mellard, however, indicates that there are some signs of an attempt to overthrow the "accepted literary conventions of visual imagery, continuous plotting, connected characterization, uniform point of view--all the mechanical aspects of pictorialism associated with Henry James and the mimetic novel."[27]

The numerous digressions tend toward the episodic which suits best a satiric narrative and are in themselves an attempt to break the linearity and sequentiality of the conventional narrative. Vonnegut's use of language also shows a tendency to abandon the standard literate prose medium. As we move further and further from the beginning, the language tends towards the less and less literate, the inarticulate, the subliterary: it becomes polyphonic.

The novel begins with a parody of the epic style of Julius Caesar's De Bello Gallico:

> ILIUM, NEW YORK, IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS.
> In the northwest are the managers and engineers and civil servants and a few professional people;

> in the northeast are the machines; and in the south, across the Iroquois River, is the area known locally as Homestead, where almost all of the people live. (1)

The suggestion is that the managers and engineers are the modern-day Romans while the people who have no function are the counterpart of the non-Romans or slaves.[28] The book ends with the colloquial speech of the Reeks and Wrecks trying to rebuild the destroyed machinery:

> Yep, if I had a decent little motor to go with what I got . . . I'll betch anything I could make a gadget that'd play drums like nothing you ever heard before. (319)

"In between," Mellard notes, "Vonnegut begins to capture the speech of the masses in Homestead, the idiom of Alfi Tucci and Haycox, the ribald insouciance of the superannuated sergeant's absurd war story. . . ;"[29] Hackett's "interior monologue" in the army, the funny barber talk in Miami, the non-language of the Shah are all given intact.

Riddles, poems, letters, even a small play are presented in their entirety in order to create the effect of immediacy as if the reader were experiencing the novel through numerous media. Vonnegut does not hesitate to give a half page catalogue of the machinery destroyed or the details on the punched "personnel card" of the computer. He even imitates the sounds of the machines which seem to Paul to create the "Building 58 Suite." All these devices serve satirical purposes: for example, the machines appeal to Paul as a symphony orchestra; he is able to distinguish the tenors: "Furraz-ow-ow-ow-ow-ak! ting! The baritones: "Vaaaaaa-

zuzip! Vaaaaaa-zuzip!" And the basses: "Aw grumph! tonka-tonka. Aw grumph! tonka-tonka. . . ." (19) This ludicrous way in which Paul perceives the machines illustrates the degree of his fascination with them.

Comic devices similar to this abound in the novel. The choice of names which suggest something ironic for each character; comic episodes like Bud's new invention or the Shah's questions; exaggerated descriptions (the activities at the Meadows); puns, clichés, understatements and gags, all result in making Player Piano a really funny book. The humor of the novel is the satirist's indispensible tool because his goal is to captivate a large audience and make his "message" memorable and entertaining. If some of the devices are too obvious, like the old-fashioned dialogue, or verge on nostalgia and sentimentality, they are nevertheless employed as part of the author's strategy to use "the most expected associations and conventions of language for the most rapid communication"[30] with his readers. Thus, the novel generally communicates its social satire successfully.

The attempt to transcend the anti-utopia formula both in subject matter and style is clear. In his unique satire, Vonnegut turns away from the world of machinery towards a critique of human character and, without becoming didactic, he implies that the solution for a better world lies within each man rather than in the effort to correct the physical conditions of the world. This concept, modestly hinted at here, is broadly treated in the next novel, The Sirens of Titan.

NOTES

[1] Mark R. Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 8.

[2] Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., "Playboy Interview," Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloons (New York: Dell, 1974), p. 261.

[3] Karen and Charles Wood, "The Vonnegut Effect: Science Fiction and Beyond," The Vonnegut Statement, p. 142; also Mark Hillegas, p. 159.

[4] Peter J. Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (New York: Warner, 1972), p. 51. Reed thinks that "in some ways, Player Piano proves the most difficult of Vonnegut's novels to assess. It seems the least settled, the least consistent to a form or mold." Also, James Goshorn, p. 156, though he finds the book "competent and entertaining," says that "its technique is relatively uninteresting."

[5] Chad Walsh, From Utopia to Nightmare (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 25, points out the pun in the word Utopia, as it comes from two Greek words meaning "no place." In English, the word is pronounced the same even when it is written "eutopia" meaning "good place." The pun is achieved apparently from the "double meaning--a good place which is no place."

[6] Hillegas, p. 5.

[7] Ibid., p.8.

[8] Wollheim, p. 16.

[9] Reed, p. 24.

[10] Wollheim, p. 17.

[11] Vonnegut, "Playboy Interview," Wampeters, p. 261.

[12] Hillegas, p. 159.

[13] Matthew Hodgart, Satire (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 185.

[14] Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Player Piano (New York: Bard / Avon, 1973), p. 14. Any references to Player Piano hereafter will be documented in the text with the page number in parentheses.

[15] Walsh, p.87.

[16] Kennard, p. 105.

[17] Reed, p. 29.

[18] Hillegas, p. 161.

[19] Tanner, p.297.

[20] Goshorn, pp. 31-32.

[21] James M. Mellard, "The Modes of Vonnegut's Fiction: Or, Player Piano Ousts Mechanical Bride and The Sirens of Titan Invade The Gutenberg Galaxy," The Vonnegut Statement, p. 185.

[22] Gilbert Highet, The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), p. 158.

[23] Goshorn, p. 115.

[24] Wood, p. 180.

[25] Reed, p. 29.

[26] Goshorn, p. 125.

[27] Mellard, p. 180.

[28] Stanley Schatt, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., (Boston: Twayne, 1976), p. 17.

[29] Mellard, p. 188.

[30] Ibid., p. 180.

CHAPTER TWO

The Sirens of Titan: "An Astral Jokebook?"

"What child wouldn't like to be
shipwrecked on a space ship with a
cargo of hamburgers, hot dogs, catsup,
sporting goods, and soda pop?"

--A publisher's note on Mrs. Sarah
Horn Canby's book Unk and Boaz in the
Caves of Mercury. (Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.,
The Sirens of Titan.)

How many angels can dance
on the point of a needle?

--Allegedly a subject of
medieval theologians.

Despite Vonnegut's attempts to transcend the conventions of anti-utopia in Player Piano, the novel remains conventional in its narrative development and the organization of its parts. In comparison with it, The Sirens of Titan, appearing seven years later, is a much more mature and sophisticated work.

Critics agree that The Sirens of Titan is more closely related to Vonnegut's later novels thematically, stylistically, as well as chronologically. "Though only his second novel," Richard Giannone writes, "it signals a clear advance over the first," and ". . . subtly works through patterns that we associate with his more recent and acclaimed books."[1]

Deceptively simple on the surface, the novel actually

has a complex structure in which several contemporary modalities from the popular culture are blended in new, unorthodox ways, that create a literary product both expressive and critical of its time.

The apparent simplicity of its style has probably caused critics like Charles Thomas Samuels and Jack Richardson to dismiss Vonnegut as a not serious writer. They question his intellectual depth and accuse him of flawed imagination and inventiveness.[2]

Others praise him perhaps for the wrong reasons. Leslie Fiedler, for instance, is excessive in his appraisal of the popular culture elements in the book and calls it Vonnegut's best novel.[3] Charles Harris, Robert Scholes, Max Schulz and Jean Kennard try to "place" Vonnegut in a group with other writers labeled absurdists, "fabulators," black humorists, or novelists of "number" respectively.[4]

Part of the trouble with the criticism of Vonnegut's work in the past, it seems, has been that few close studies of his novels have been made. In addition, even our critical vocabulary has not always been adequate to deal with the fiction of contemporary writers such as Barth, Barthelme, Pynchon, or Vonnegut. Finally, a third reason pointed out by Conrad Festa is that though few critics fail to recognize the satire in Vonnegut's fiction, most of them "continue to treat the satire as if it were incidental to the work. Consequently, the satire is largely forgotten and certainly not allowed its full play." Festa emphasizes that "the satire

in his work is dominant, central, and sustained," and asserts that failure to appreciate this "is critical for both the evaluation and interpretation of his fiction."[5] His opinion is shared by James Goshorn, Thomas Wymer and Donald D. Lawler who apply a structural analysis to Vonnegut's novels that helps provide an important key to the underlying art of his satire. Lawler notes that Vonnegut's originality in The Sirens of Titan lies in his "blending together the structural features of literary types [such as science fiction and comedy] in the service of satire with a bedrock serious intention."[6]

This chapter will examine the formal structure of the novel in order to show the particular way in which Vonnegut uses science fiction elements to express his satirical vision. The analysis of the novel's structure will identify the various literary types that create the satirical context and will show that The Sirens of Titan is not merely a science fiction novel--although it can qualify as a fine piece of science fiction by many standards; that above all, it is a sophisticated literary creation which paradoxically puts to use stereotypical forms of popular culture. Vonnegut not only draws upon science fiction themes and techniques to satirize people's absurd attitudes toward great philosophical issues, but he is doing so by parodying his own formal means. In consequence, the satirical targets in the novel will be identified after the evaluation of the expressive forms and their combinations in the structure. To further

illustrate the mechanisms of satire, the study will include the examination of the novelistic elements of satire, that is, plot lines and themes, the narrator's role, characterization and style.

In The Sirens of Titan, the most obvious characteristic is its science fiction features. Even the lurid cover of the paperback edition makes that aspect readily conspicuous. The novel employs an unusually large number of science fiction elements: space travel, inhuman aliens controlling human thought, manipulation of history, interplanetary warfare, brainwashing, new religions, adaptation to new environments, and many others. Irrespective of the special purposes that these elements are made to serve, it must be stated from the outset that they constitute an imaginary universe in which the story of the novel is set. It is a world in which Tralfamadorian robots and Titanic bluebirds, chrono-synclastic infundibula and Mercurian Harmoniums exist and play an important role. Without them, the meaning of the novel could not be adequately communicated.

Space travel is the most important of these conventions since it is a vital element of the narrative. The main story, set in a future era, relates the protagonist's travels to Mars, Mercury, and Titan, one of Saturn's moons. The novel also describes a Martian attack on Earth and an intergalactic expedition from the planet Tralfamadore to the opposite extreme of the Universe. Undoubtedly then, considering Donald Wollheim's classification of science

fiction stories, The Sirens of Titan falls neatly within his first category of "Imaginary Voyages;"

> Under "Imaginary Voyages" come trips to the prehistoric past or the center of the earth, voyages to unexpected parts of this world such as Gulliver's Travels and She, visits to the infinitely small and infinitely large, trips to the future and so on.[7]

During these trips, the traveller is sure to encounter alien beings or humans living on a different plane of existence.[8] There is evidence of all these characteristics in the novel. Both Rumfoord and Malachi Constant leave the Earth in space ships and encounter inhuman beings such as the harmoniums in the caves of Mercury, or Salo, the Tralfamadorian robot messenger on Titan. Rumfoord himself exists as part of wave phenomena (chrono-synclastic infundibula). The Martian army, peopled by kidnapped Earthlings, have become automata by means of electronic antennae in their skulls and use oxygen from pills.

Gilbert Highet comments that the purposes to which such journeyings are employed are various. Some of them may be heroic (Odysseus' descent into the kingdom of the Dead), mystical (Dante's ascent on Mount Purgatory), comic (as in Aristophanes' Frogs), or merely fanciful (as in H. G. Wells' First Men in the Moon and its innumerable imitations of science fiction). However, Highet concludes, "when [the imaginary voyage] involves criticism of life in this world, with exposures of human vices and weaknesses and bitter or teasing humor, then it is satire."[9]

In modern times, with the inherent possibilities of space and time travel in science fiction, the old traveller of satirical geographic travels is transformed into a space wanderer visiting strange planets and stars. In the hands of a serious writer the interplanetary voyage can become an equally useful vehicle for satire.

Donald Lawler points out that "the purpose of art as Vonnegut sees it . . . is very much like a criticism of life and the ideas introduced by [him] in The Sirens of Titan are taken primarily from metaphysics, moral philosophy, and theology."[10] The writer uses science fiction as a narrative shell for his satirical criticism. For, as in Player Piano, Vonnegut is not interested in teaching science. The Sirens of Titan shows clearly the authorial intention to comment about life in this world rather than to celebrate the technological marvels of the future. In that respect, the "imaginary voyage" type partakes of another of Wollheim's classifications, "Social Satire."[11]

Wollheim observes, however, that Vonnegut's attitude toward science fiction is quite different from that of the regular science fiction writers who approach it with "that deadly seriousness." Vonnegut invites the reader to treat the science fiction in the novel with the same self-conscious levity that he himself seems to enjoy. As Karen and Charles Wood note, "when we compare The Sirens of Titan to other works of science fiction we become

aware of the curled lip of the author in the background, and are instantly convinced of his desire to parody science fiction."[12] Vonnegut parodies science fiction by accumulating a plethora of motifs and devices which are of an obviously hackneyed character. And above all, he chooses the most contemptible type of science fiction: space opera. The "imaginary voyage" formula provides the backbone of the narrative, but it is the conventions of space opera in combination with nonsensical comedy that determine the form of the novel.

The parody of science fiction, therefore, is yet another indication of its satirical nature. Highet writes that,

> Parody is one of the most delightful forms of satire, one of the most natural, perhaps the most satisfying, and often the most effective. It springs from the very heart of our sense of comedy, which is the happy perception of incongruity.[13]

In The Sirens of Titan the parody of science fiction is of two types: formal and material. The distortion and exaggeration of the space opera conventions result in the derision of "hard-core" science fiction. But, because space opera, as literature of outwardness, facilitates the burlesque of existential and philosophical ideas in the subject matter of the novel, it is also material parody. In fact, there are indications that Vonnegut parodies genuine science fiction as well. The values that serious science fiction promotes are similar to the ones that Vonnegut attacks in the novel. Von-

negut, according to Lundquist, has stated that his views concerning the aims of science fiction are diametrically opposite to Arthur C. Clarke's. Clarke believes that "the earth is our cradle and the solar system our kindergarten, and that it is our destiny to travel to the stars."[14] These are exactly the ideas the novel sets out to criticize.

Moreover, Vonnegut's invented religion of God the Utterly Indifferent, may have one more satirical function, other than deriding Rumfoord's humanitarian reform. It may also be indirectly parodying a number of invented religions which spring out of science fiction and are later established as a kind of cult, such as Ron L. Hubbard's Dianetics which claims at least four million followers today.[15] Lundquist, commenting on the influence of science fiction on Vonnegut, states that "not only does he draw from the form, but he appears to have been aware of its intimate changes and was influenced by the work and ideas of such figures as John W. Campbell, Jr., and Hubbard, as well as by other less bizarre figures such as Arthur Clarke and Asimov."[16]

The Sirens of Titan, therefore, is a montage of formal structures that are used for satirical purposes. In order to appreciate how these formal elements interact with each other and what effects they create we will have to examine the structure of the novel and its narrative architecture.

A careful look at the structure of the novel will expose a structural design that suggests its satiric character. The novel does not begin with the story. It open with a small

introduction by a narrator persona addressing an imaginary audience in the future. The narrator pretends to live in a utopian era when everybody knew "how to find the meaning of life within himself."[17] The narrator comments on "The Nightmare Ages," the previous period set "between the Second World War and the Third Great Depression," when mankind was obsessed with searching the space in order to find "who was in charge of all creation and what all creation was all about." (7) In a tone characteristic of the old fashioned storyteller, the narrator proposes to tell a true story as a demonstration of how futile mankind's efforts were to seek the designs of providence in infinite space.

The novel ends with a fable, the protagonist's dream that he finally meets with his best friend, Stony, who takes him to Paradise in a flying saucer. Both the once-upon-a-time formula of the beginning and the fairy tale ending envelop the story in a frame that suggests the fictional base of the novel.

As a satirist, the author, of course, insists, both in the novel's dedication and in the introduction, that "all persons, places and events in the book are real" and that the story he is going to tell is true. But it is the satirist's strategy to pretend telling the truth and nothing but the truth. However, the novel's structural design apparently indicates otherwise. It implies that a story enclosed in a fictional frame of this type must also be fictitious and fantastic, that it is not to be considered

at face value but to be appreciated as a satirist's contrivance necessary to express his satirical vision.

The utopian introduction serves a number of various other purposes as well. As an alienation technique, it helps to estrange the reader from his own present, to introduce him into the cosmic order of the novel's imaginary universe. It also sets the reader against the philosophical attitude of looking outward for existential answers, an attitude that is derided in the novel. Finally, the author briefs the reader in with inside information about what kind of a novel to expect: one of "empty heroics, low comedy and pointless death." (8) These are key words because they conceal Vonnegut's techniques and their effects. They imply the forms he uses (parody of space opera and comedy, for instance, in "empty heroics") the burlesque of ideas ("low comedy") and their effects (absurdity in "pointless death.")

While science fiction provides the bare essentials for the space travel narrative, added to these are the conventions of space opera and the principles of the cosmic joke structure which create a totally new dimension.

Space opera is especially suited to Vonnegut's purposes because it is closer to fantasy than to science fiction. Vonnegut uses it as a form of fantasy science fiction which creates a metaphorical context for his vision. It is the "enabling form" as Lawler calls it, because "it permits him to develop textures of thought otherwise denied

him."[18] Malachi Constant's interplanetary wanderings become a fantastic metaphor for his spiritual growth, as Giannone remarks:

> In keeping with his desire to reach a large popular readership, Vonnegut vivifies Constant's trip into the inner terra incognita of love through the great contemporary mythic voyage, the space odyssey. (A Joyce or a Proust would use the less accessible metaphor of mental association to chart the route into the psyche's unknown areas.)[19]

Space opera, however, is the "enabling form" not only for Vonnegut's serious ideas, but for his burlesque as well. As a literature of sensational adventure and extravagance, space opera exemplifies attitudes diametrically opposite to Vonnegut's, but it is primarily for this reason that it was chosen by him. The potentials of the space opera conventions for Vonnegut are noted by Lawler. First of all, it is a literary type of outwardness. In its hyperbolic settings, heroic adventure in space exploration is projected into a glorified dimension. It uses idealized types as characters (usually distinguishable as the heroes and the villains) "trapped in technological marvels and advanced ideas." The heroes surpass their limitations in achieving acts of great prowess "by sheer inventiveness, ingenuity, courage, and willpower."[20]

Vonnegut applies these conventions to the narrative, but not without exaggeration and distortion, as he parodies the form. The presentation of characters and action in the first chapter, for instance, is in imitation of the tech-

niques of space opera. Malachi Constant and the Rumfoords are not ordinary people. The first, rich as Croesus and a Hollywood playboy, shows already a predisposition for an extraordinary adventure. The narrator comments that ". . . Constant pined for just one thing--a single message that was sufficiently dignified and important to merit his carrying it humbly between two points." (17) The Rumfoords are true aristocrats. Rumfoord is presented as a galant, intrepid space sportsman. His prophesies arouse our expectations for an exciting adventure on Mars, Mercury and Titan; his photograph of the stunningly beautiful "sirens" on Titan adds to the expectations with a promise of sensational romance.

As the narrative unfolds from the second chapter to the last, none of these expectations comes to be fulfilled. On the contrary, instead of presenting great heroic acts as "an affirmation of the idea that the heroes are capable of transcending their natural limitations,"[21] the narrative presents a long series of events in which the main characters perpetually fall victims to a cruel fate. At least, they think so until it is revealed to them that their odyssey of endless suffering has been purposefully created by Rumfoord and the Tralfamadorians. Instead of being heroic figures, Malachi Constant and Beatrice Rumfoord are for the most part of the story pathetic little people, unable even to know who is controlling their lives. In vain they try to seek a meaningful explanation for every absurd event happening to

to them. And the final explanation that their lives as well as everybody else's have been used so that a spare part could be supplied to an alien messenger's space ship is even more absurd than any of the events before. The only heroic aspect of Malachi is the extraordinary degree of his endurance. He survives seven brain cleaning operations, the constant, terrible pain from his antenna, two years of captivity in the caves of Mercury and exile from the Earth only hours after his arrival there. Rumfoord represents Malachi's antagonist, the "villain" in the novel. His intentions to improve life on Earth may be noble, but his means are regrettable. The result of his machinations is also absurd. His new religion of God, the Utterly Indifferent is yet another meaningless institution like those it replaces, another "granfalloon."[22]

In terms of plot, as Stanley Schatt notes, The Sirens of Titan is more complicated than the "mere counterpointing of Paul Proteus and the Shah of Bratpuhr in Player Piano."[23] Here, there are three distinct plot lines merging within each other like concentric circles. First, the personal story of Malachi with all his travels and adventures among the planets occupies the inner circle, being the nucleus of the novel's narrative. A broader circle represents Rumfoord's machinations of which the Malachi-plot is part. Both these stories, finally, and the whole history of Earth's civilization are part of the Tralfamadorian plot to send a message to "the other Rim of the Universe."

One pattern becomes readily distinguishable in this kind of plot structure, where parts are included within larger ones and so on infinitely. According to Glenn Meeter, this device is called "regressus in infinitum" and is detected in the later novels too. It is also characteristic of the techniques of other contemporary writers like Barth, Nabokov, and Borges, for the creation of what John Barth calls "the contamination of reality by dream."[24] In this novel it has the effect of creating levels of escalating fantasy. Life on Earth, as presented in the first third of the book is still recognizable with its consumerism, its gimcrack religions and debased politics. That image of life is changed drastically to a fantastic level by Rumfoord's machinations in the second and largest part of the book. Finally, in the last part, the world picture viewed from the Tralfamadorian perspective becomes extremely bizarre and utterly fantastic. As Lawler points out, fantasy facilitates a relocation of perception:

> Relocated or dislocated perceptions are a creative action, a kind of fictional frenzy in which an artist may discover an appropriate, if fantastic metaphor for his observation of human frustration.[25]

A "fictional frenzy" is indeed what best characterizes the fantastic quality of the novel. The conventions of space opera allow the author's inventiveness full rein with such fantastic attractions as the chrono-synclastic infundibula, the Mercurian Harmoniums, the Universal Will to Become, the Schliemann breathing technique, or the Church of God, the

Utterly Indifferent. The characters are loaded with superlatives. Malachi is referred to as "the luckiest man that ever lived;" his financial manager is called "the highest paid executive in the country;" Beatrice is the most haughty, aristocratic woman on Earth; Salo is elected as "the most handsome, healthy, clean-minded specimen of his people." Commenting on the "expressionistic" effects of space opera in the book, Giannone remarks that "in this novel Buck Rogers and Captain Marvel fly again as Mars invades Earth and allegorical figures engage in daring pursuits . . . Oh-ing and ah-ing before such giantism go hand in hand with contemporary folk fantasy."[26]

All these exaggerations are used by the author to induce in the reader a sense of innocent wonder, a sense of the "child-like" that liberates the imagination and allows a fresh, new perspective to see things that we have been conditioned to perceive from the same angles.

These exaggerations have also the effect of giving the narrative the quality of a tale. Giannone maintains that the space opera qualities make "The Sirens of Titan . . . almost a parable."[27](his emphasis). The qualification "almost" is necessary here since the metaphorical content extended in this "tale" is not so much an idea as an attitude. As in a parable, the narrative employs a lengthy and elaborate development of the space travel metaphor; unlike a parable, however, as Lawler indicates, it ends in a bizarre negation of the reader's expectations--in an analogous manner of a novel-

istic conceit form known as the "shaggy-dog" story.[28] A definition of the term "shaggy-dog" story is provided by Jan Harold Brunvand in his Classifications for Shaggy-Dog Stories as,

> a nonsensical joke that employs in the punch line a psychological non-sequitur, a punning variation of a familiar saying, or a hoax, to trick the listener who expects conventional wit or humor. Such jokes usually describe ridiculous characters and actions and are often told (to heighten the effect of the final letdown) in a long, drawn-out style with minute details, repetitions and elaborations.[29]

Vonnegut employs the nonsensical joke on at least two occasions in the narrative, while he also applies the principle of the extended joke structure to the plot construction as a whole. Two variations of the shaggy-dog story can be identified in the Tralfamadorian plot-line. One is the cosmic joke of the Tralfamadorian influence in human affairs. The other is the revelation of the trivial message being carried through the galaxies. The first is known as a hoax story, which, according to Highet, is "a lie or an exaggeration that is intended to deceive,"[30] but has a purpose of proving something. As such it is an effective satiric form. In the plot, this joke points out that the glorious civilizations man has created on Earth throughout the centuries are nothing but semaphore signals for a Tralfamadorian communications system. The punch line of the joke is delivered by Rumfoord when he says to Chrono: "In your pocket is the mysterious something that every Earthling was trying so earnestly, so gropingly, so exaustingly to produce and deliver." (297)

The other joke is a species of the shaggy-dog story classified as the "catch tale," because its ending is a calculated let-down. The disclosure of Salo's message reveals a single dot which means "Greetings." This is the ultimate irony, which, given the astronomical range of the novel's action, is literally cosmic. The use of the psychological non-sequitur of both jokes heightens the absurdity that has been building throughout the narrative.

The psychological non-sequitur of the shaggy-dog story applies also to the other plot lines. In Malachi's story, the sirens in Rumfoord's picture are used as a symbol of Malachi's wish for sexual fulfillment; they prove to be peat statues in the bottom of a pool on Titan. The impact of the let-down is greater here as Malachi, worn out from so many years of suffering,is unable even to feel the irony of their true nature. Malachi's line in the beginning of the book, "I guess somebody up there likes me," comes to be validated in the end, but in a totally different way than he expected.

The calculated let-down is successfully employed in the Rumfoord plot, too. The army he prepares on Mars, far more ferocious than any Martian army in popular science fiction, does not conquer the Earth (as it usually happens in Martian invasions), but is ruthlessly annihilated by an excessive thermo-nuclear barrage from the Earth. As for the new religion he introduces, it becomes a grotesque parody of philanthropy. Its three billion followers have been reduced

to the unthinking status of the Mercurian harmoniums. In each of his ritualistic shows, Rumfoord hoaxes his crowds as playfully as the narrator-storyteller does his readers in his apologue.

The principle of the extended joke structure can be identified in the narrative process as well. The novel not only adopts a lengthy, elaborate development of the imaginary voyage, but also utilizes the psychological non-sequitur principle in negating the readers' expectations. As the action develops along the different plot levels, the reader is continually driven to adopt new answers to the questions of what is happening to the characters. For example, we think that we understand what is happening to Malachi when it is revealed that Rumfoord is the mastermind behind the Martian invasion of Earth and the new religion. Later, when Rumfoord is shown to have been a Tralfamadorian tool, we reconsider our "explanations" and substitute them with new ones. In the end, we are left with no answers, as even the final explanation that everything has been engineered and controlled by Tralfamadore is inadequate, because it raises the larger philosophical question of who is controlling the Tralfamadorians.

In reciprocal combination, therefore, the two forms of space opera and the extended joke structure are most effective in a satirical narrative, because they not only dramatize the main theme of the book--the futility of seeking outward for the meaning of life, but they illustrate it

through their form as well.

The thesis of the novel is not that life is meaningless, as the black humor theorists argue, but the way in which people live is. In vain has mankind tried to answer the great abstract questions of the mystery of existence and the meaning of life for thousands of years. Vonnegut implies that in an objective sense any absolute answers are impossible. The main target of the novel's satire is the assumption that happiness and the purpose of life can be sought outside the self; that probably some superhuman agency is in control of life and if we look for it we will find an answer. The space travel metaphor illustrates that the universe is indifferent to man's aspirations.

The book also demonstrates the dangers that the search for absolute answers entails: outwardness alienates the self from meaningful contact with the fellow man. Seeking happiness in the unknown, as is the case with Malachi, reduces him to an object, he, himself contributing to his dehumanization. As Wymer remarks, "Vonnegut's point is that the answers are meaningless because the <u>questions</u> are absurd."[31] Vonnegut's burlesque of metaphysics and theology is so successful because the Tralfamadorian explanation of the meaning of mankind's history appears to be as plausible as that of orthodox theology, yet it is utterly absurd. The author's strategy in ridiculing the doctrines of theology and metaphysics, Lawler indicates, is "to take their symbolic forms literally, replacing teleological visions with punning fan-

tasies."[32] It is the standard technique of the satirist to make the abstract concrete. Thus, Constant's space odyssey is a metaphor for the "journey into the 'terra incognita' of the soul." The Tralfamadorian robot, Salo, watching the Earth from his powerful viewer, literally epitomizes the big-eye-in-the-sky philosophy of Bobby Denton's "gimcrack" religion. Man's wish to improve himself is translated into the Tralfamadorian form of energy, "The Universal Will to Become," that has directed human thought and action since the dawn of civilization. The Bible, symbol of spiritual growth for Christianity, becomes the only tool for Noel Constant's financial success. The handicaps of life are literally transformed into actual weights of lead that the believers of the new religion voluntarily bear on their shoulders. Psychological brainwashing is dramatized as actual brain cleaning on Mars.

Treating the serious topics and symbols of the traditional schools of thought with such irreverence is the satiric technique of burlesque and its effect is low comedy as was predicted in the introduction by the narrator. Vonnegut's satire functions very much like Voltaire's in Candide. For the most part of the novel, the satirist deminstrates ad absurdum the fallibility of philosophical ideas and attitudes with the technique of ironic inversion. To elicit a positive value in the reader, the satirist presents the falseness of a negative one. The impact of the novel lies in the effective technique of cosmic irony which demonstrates the meaninglessness of outwardness.

As much as these and other minor targets are satirized, the novel offers positive ideas that strongly suggest the posibility of a meaningful life. Since no absolute answers can be found in the universe, the satirist's "message" implies, the only decent attitude left is to stop seeking them and rely on a subjective, even though, limited view-point. By the time Malachi and Beatrice reach a point of resignation and stop caring about whatever happens, they are able to turn inward and appreciate human values such as love, compassion and friendship. Beatrice is able to refute her husband's notion of the purpose of life in the Solar System, when she expresses the idea that "the worst thing that could possibly happen to anybody would be not to be used for anything by anybody."(310) Constant is able to feel love at last: "It took us that long to realize that the purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved."(313) In an indifferent universe where all answers are relative, only the subjective truth of human emotions can be comforting and it is the only virtue under the circumstances.

The use of the narrator as a satirical persona has already been pointed out earlier. The narrator's omniscience allows the reader to adopt a similar attitude towards the narrative, necessary to appreciate the irony both in the action and in the language of the novel. What is especially noteworthy in this work is the use of Rumfoord as an auxiliary narrator. Tony Tanner notes that "Rumfoord is a

suitable fantastic analogue of Vonnegut himself."[31] Like the narrator, Rumfoord reveals some of the future events while he also withholds certain information essential to the story development. Similarly, the narrator withholds the important information that Rumfoord too has been used by Tralfamadore. When Rumfoord comes to know this he withdraws from Salo's friendship which adds to the irony of the novel. The most important advantage of the "double" narrator, however, is stated by Reed:

> Rumfoord's role as a cynical prophet and manipulator. . . serves as a buffer for the author. Without the presence of a spokesman for the inevitability of events, the absence of free will, the lack of meaning in the Universe, and the meaner aspects of human behavior, this cynicism might accrue to the author himself and damage the tone of the novel.[34]

The reader associates the bleakest and most negative aspects in the view of the Universe with Rumfoord (or even is led to believe that Rumfoord is responsible for them), while there are also affirmative possibilities offered in the total vision of the author.

The characters that populate the book share the element of unreality which pervades it. As has been shown earlier, they are described with a lot of superlative adjectives. They are clearly types or invented characters much like those in popular science fiction. As such, however, they are ideal for the purposes of satire, because characters in satire, as Highet points out, "seldom develop by degrees as people in real novels do. They may display more of their character as the story drops them into new situations, but they do not

grow."[35]

For the greatest part of the novel, the characters may be compared to those of a morality play with Rumfoord in the role of the puppeteer, pulling the strings--with the difference though, as the narrator observes, that in his passion play Rumfoord "used nothing but real people in real hells." (239) Vonnegut's characters are limited because they are used as ironic reflectors of ideas. Vonnegut looks at man as an essential social being. The theme of friendship dramatizes man's need to be useful to others. On the other hand, man's need to belong somewhere, to groups, things, and philosophies results in his being used and abused by these groups to the point of dehumanization. Rumfoord's war and religion dramatizes this idea most effectively. People are literally mechanized. The whole novel is about manipulators and manipulated people. "In this way," Kennard comments, "Vonnegut is working against the expectations of the reader for "human," rounded characters. He then undercuts his own method deliberately. Salo, a machine, is more humane than the earthlings."[35]

Interesting is the treatment of the protagonist in the novel. Malachi is surely an <u>ingénu</u> type, since his role is reduced to an observer of events happening to him and to others without having the power to change or avoid them. As Goshorn notes, "the <u>ingénu</u> figure known as Malachi, Unk, and Space Wanderer, changes his role and his name three times as the story progresses."[37] Viewed in terms of a mytholo-

gical hero, Malachi is also a "Jonah" figure. He chooses the pseudonym "Jonah Rowley" for his incognito visit to the Rumfoord estate and the space ship he owns is called "The Whale." But above all, his famous phrase as a Space Wanderer describes best his role as "Jonah:" "I WAS A VICTIM OF A SERIES OF ACCIDENTS, AS ARE WE ALL." (229) Actually, the "Jonah" theme, appearing also in Cat's Cradle, is employed here in a parody of the biblical myth, since the God in The Sirens of Titan is "Utterly Indifferent" and Malachi as Jonah is a Space Wanderer without any message at all. In a way, all the chief characters partake of Malachi's "Jonah" quality, because their lives are a series of misadventures where no "message" is involved.

Eventually, however, all the main characters change. It is characteristic of satirical characters, Highet maintains that

> at the end, they sometimes undergo a radical change which corresponds to the change which the satirist himself wishes to induce in the readers. Candide believes in the optimistic theory of Leibniz through twenty-nine chapters of hideous and comical misadventures and is only converted to realism in the thirtieth and final chapter, by a total stranger.[38]

Malachi becomes at the end exactly the opposite to what he was in the beginning. He is now a mellow and loving husband, self-sufficient and understanding. Beatrice is no more the haughty, aristocratic, touch-me-not lady of New England. She is a warm and tender wife. Chrono, too is changed. He is no more the wild, aggressive son of Mars; he becomes one with the harmony and serenity of Titan and

discovers the joy of life. Even Salo changes considerably by watching mankind for so long. He shows human "emotions," friendship, compassion, loyalty, unlike Rumfoord, who remains embittered and isolated to the end. Although he accuses Salo of being a machine, it is he who acts with a callous insensitivity and inflexibility. He, the arrogant manipulator of so many human lives, feels cheated when he discovers the influence of Tralfamadore on every Earthling, himself included. The satirist is himself satirized. "The shock of that recognition," Goshorn aptly remarks, "is the source of ironic satire on man's clear vision of others and his impossibility of seeing himself."[39]

Finally, it is important to briefly note the author's style as another pervasive aspect of the novel's satire. Earlier, in the treatment of structure, it was noted how Vonnegut instills new life into the formulaic types of popular culture such as the space opera and the non-sensical joke. Vonnegut's aim in using the popular, non-literate modalities of mass culture is to attract the attention of large audiences; attracting the audience to his own side is the goal of every satirist who wants to make his message memorable and entertaining. The satirist has to appeal to common sense, plain reason and simple logic. The easiest channels of communication are those of pure convention which, as Frye asserts, characterize naive literature.[40] Vonnegut extends this technique to his use of language. His style is deceptively simple, because it uses all kinds of triteness,

clichés and stereotypes. James Mellard indicates, however, how Vonnegut validates those stereotypical expressions with a new, fresh meaning within the context by transcending the old, pictorial, linear style of the McLuhanesque visual universe of Gutenberg Galaxy:

> Where the uniform, visual, linear mode of the novel either absorbs human utterence into a single uniform prose style or draws a clear class line between styles, the mode Vonnegut popularizes in The Sirens of Titan absorbs, polyphonic, acoustic, open forms into a mosaic of styles, each of which controls its autonomous existence.[41]

Indeed, Vonnegut's method is to recreate experience with a mosaic of styles. An example of the use of the acoustic mode is the nonsense chant in the fourth chapter. Vonnegut communicates much more powerfully the mental condition of the soldiers and the degree of brain-washing by the reproduction of the sound of a martial chant with three nonsense words: "Rented a tent." The nonsense chant, after being repeated four times, makes perfect sense. Examples of the old, oral, aural, acoustic mode abound in the novel. Bobby Denton's sermon and prayers, Rumfoord's lectures, numerous stories, tales and legends interspersed by the narrator throughout the narrative and interrupting the action, is Vonnegut's way to undermine the single, uniform, linear prose style of the novel in the old sense. Besides, this non-linear style is especially suitable for the informality and looseness of the satiric form. Highet observes that satiric stories are "usually episodic. Although the satirist pretends to be telling a continuous story . . . he is less interested in developing

a plot, with preparation, suspense, and climax, than in displaying many different aspects of an idea."[42] For, example, at one point the action is interrupted by Salo's legend of his planet's history. With that tale the narrator draws for us a moral that indirectly comments on the main idea of the novel, the obsession of seeking any purpose in life.

The novel also relies on other modes of expression: there are paintings, statues, architecture, poems, letters, photographs, histories, biographies, new bibles and quotations from all sorts of fictional material that are put to use in a similar manner as the non-chant drum and the other manifestations of the acoustic expressions.

Another important aspect of Vonnegut's style is the inserted fictional material and the quotations from so many fictional authors in the novel. By contrasting the works of his fictional authors to his own fictional creations, Vonnegut intends to show the relationship between the real and the fantastic, between fact and fiction. Unk's letter to himself is an appropriate example. The subdivision of the letter to forms of knowledge that have been established as objective means of discovering the truth (history, biology, astronomy, theology) bait the reader to regard it as a viable account of objective knowledge. Nevertheless, when Unk's signature appears at the bottom of the letter, one question occupies the reader's mind: Were these items "facts," of fiction? By interrupting the action with these apparent excerpts from "books of knowledge" that suggest valuable information but

provide none, Vonnegut questions the realism of the novel in the older sense.

Vonnegut's basic narrative style is characterized by short, direct statements without those transitions and adverbial clauses that appeared in Player Piano. The narrator's language is so bland that it calls attention to itself. Lawler notes that "as the style descends to the level of the Voice of America's "Special English" broadcast, it is almost always a signal of satirical intent."[43]

The Sirens of Titan, therefore, though Vonnegut's most overtly science fiction novel, is a very carefylly constructed and artistically executed novel. Its strength is in Vonnegut's vivid imagination and inventiveness to combine conventions of science fiction with comedy in a serio-comic satiric form. The satire is mostly successful, because space opera was appropriately chosen not only for the burlesque of serious ideas, but for self-parody as well. In that respect, Vonnegut's criticism extends not only to the "existential 'whys,'" and people's attitudes toward them, but also focuses on the author's problem of how he approaches fiction. In his fantasy-fiction, Vonnegut shows the relativity of values, but instead of adopting the despair of black humor, he offers some moral stimulation--most overtly in this book than in any other, for the affirmation of human values in the midst of meaninglessness. The next novel to be examined, Cat's Cradle, will further show yet more experimentation with structures and the evolving technique of Vonnegut as satirist.

NOTES

[1] Wolfe, p. 965, states that the novel should not be classified with Player Piano as Vonnegut's "science fiction period," and that science fiction is at least a "device . . . which provides him with the necessary metaphor for his vision." Richard Giannone, Vonnegut (New York: Kennikat Press, 1977), p. 26, expresses the same view-point saying that Vonnegut's second novel is the best place to begin a demonstration of the formal side of his achievement.

[2] Charles Thomas Samuels, "Age of Vonnegut," New Republic, CLXIV (June 12, 1971), 30-32, calls Vonnegut a "bogus talent," a repetitious and uninventive writer whose own spiritual age is late adolescence. Jack Richardson, "Easy Writer," New York Review of Books, 15 (July 2, 1970), 7-8, accuses him of flawed imagination ("his ideas are facile and flashy") which he "takes no pains to disguise."

[3] Leslie Fiedler, "The Divine Stupidity of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.," Esquire, 74 (September 1970), 195-97, 199-200, 202-4. Fiedler prefers the fantasy elements in the novel because they represent for him the "new age" in fiction. The "divine stupidity" of his title implies that Vonnegut is not aware of the importance of fantasy in his fiction.

[4] Harris, pp. 51-75; Scholes, pp. 35-55; Schulz, pp. 43-65; Kennard, pp. 101-28.

[5] Conrad Festa, "Vonnegut's Satire," Vonnegut in Ameri-

ca, ed. by Jerome Klinkowitz and Donald D. Lawler (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977), p. 133.

[6] Goshorn, "The Queasy World;" Wymer, "The Swiftian Satire;" Donald D. Lawler, "The Sirens of Titan: Vonnegut's Metaphysical Shaggy-Dog Story," Vonnegut in America, pp. 61-86. The quotation from Lawler is cited from page 81.

[7] Wollheim, p. 16.

[8] Highet, p. 162, also investigates the history of the imaginary voyage and identifies the different variations of the "voyage" in forms of visits to strange lands and other worlds.

[9] Ibid., p. 163.

[10] Lawler, p. 66. He supports this argument by citing Vonnegut from "The Playboy Interview," in Vonnegut's Wampeters, p. 237: "Writers are specialized cells in the social organism. They are evolutionary cells. Mankind is trying to become something else; it's experimenting with new ideas all the time. And writers are a means of introducing new ideas into the society. . . ."

[11] Wollheim, p. 16. The definition of his last category, "Social Satire," has already been given in the first chapter. Wollheim points out that "Social Satire" may co-exist with any other type, but it is still "a class by itself because of the motivation of the writer."

[12] Karen and Charles Wood, p. 150.

[13] Highet, p. 67. I am indebted to his study for the discussion of the two types of parody.

[14] Lundquist, pp. 85-100, devotes a whole chapter of his book to the subject of science fiction in Vonnegut and discusses all possible influences upon him.

[15] Ibid., p. 92. Hubbard's religion is an invented one. Hubbard is quoted from his speech at a convetion of science fiction writers in 1949 saying: "Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man really wanted to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion."

[16] Ibid., p. 94.

[17] Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., The Sirens of Titan (New York: Dell, 1972), p. 7. All further references to this book will be documented in the text with the page number in parentheses.

[18] Lawler, p. 72, states: "By 'enabling form' I mean simply a contrivance which extends a writer's capacity for treating a subject or for expression beyond the limits of either traditional discourse or his own private views."

[19] Giannone, p. 30.

[20] Lawler, p. 71. The characteristics of space opera are given in paraphrase from Lawler's article.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Vonnegut, Wampeters, p. xv. In his preface to the book Vonnegut explains the meaning of his term "granfalloon"

as "a proud and meaningless association of human beings." I think this term describes perfectly well the Church of God, the Utterly Indifferent.

[23] Schatt, p. 30.

[24] Meeter, p.206.

[25] Lawler, p. 74.

[26] Giannone, p. 28, remarks that these obviously exaggerated characters come "from kitsch, such as comic strips and movie serials." See also Lawler, p. 74, for an assessment of Vonnegut's peculiarly "expressionistic effects."

[27] Giannone, p. 27.

[28] Lawler, p. 61.

[29] Jan Harold Brunvand, "A Classification for Shaggy-Dog Stories," Journal of American Folklore, 76 (1963), p. 44. Brunvand is indebted to Eric Partridge's The "Shaggy-Dog" Story, Its Origin, Development, and Nature (Freeport, N. Y.: 1970)(a reprint of the 1953 edition).

[30] Highet, p. 29.

[31] Wymer, p. 253.

[32] Lawler, p. 72.

[33] Tanner, p. 298.

[34] Reed, p. 73.

[35] Highet, p. 206.

[36] Kennard, p. 110.

[37] Goshorn, p. 156.

[38] Highet, p. 206.

[39] Goshorn, p. 65.

[40] Frye, pp. 103, 367.

[41] Mellard, p. 194.

[42] Highet, p. 206.

[43] Lawler, p. 77.

CHAPTER THREE

Cat's Cradle: The Day the World Ended.

> ". . . and I would make a statue of myself, lying on my back, grinning horribly, and thumbing my nose at You Know Who."
>
> --Bokonon. (Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Cat's Cradle.)

Compared with the two previous novels, Cat's Cradle is, according to Peter Reed, "more superficial," "more fragmentary," "weaker in its ability to evoke emotion or concern, and consequently less substantial."[1] Since it deals with the same themes it is considered by some critics "as a résumé of what came before."[2] However, behind the apparent simplicity and ordinariness of its presentation there is much complexity in the novel's structure.

In his fourth book, Vonnegut moves further away from the conventional and representational types of novel. The plot is fragmentary and episodic in its development and the time sequence as unconventional as in Mother Night. Even in its printed format it is highly fragmentary: there are one hundred and twenty-seven chapters in less than two hundred pages. It seems that the symbolic title applies not only to its subject matter but to the novel's form as well. Its form

is so complex, that like cat's cradle, the children's game, it depends on which angle one views it from. Thus, Karen and Charles Wood, who see it from the science fiction point of view, regard it as the story of the "cataclysmic ending of the existence of the universe through the action of man."[3] From another view-point, Richard Giannone considers it as a modern "Jonah" story due to its apparent similarity with the prophetic Old Testament book.[4] For Glenn Meeter, the plot of the novel is "both a conversion story (from Christianity to Bokononism) and a parody of the Bildungsroman."[5] All these views, being not necessarily exclusive of one another, reflect parts within the whole much like the complex patterns of cat's cradle which are parts of the same string. Furthermore, the whole novel as it is written, resembles the game of cat's cradle, because, as the latter is an invention itself, there is much emphasis on the nature of the novel as being purely fictitious, totally fantastic and invented, as merely make-believe. "In Cat's Cradle," Peter Reed observes, "the paradoxes of artist and deceiver, truth and lie, reality and pretense, as propounded in Mother Night are projected into a sustained game."[6]

Therefore, since the science fiction element of the novel is part of the overall fantasy, it must be considered within this larger context.

The analysis in this chapter then, will start with the examination of science fiction and fantasy on the level of plot. The major symbols of the novel will come in for

brief consideration as they illustrate Vonnegut's vision of the fantastic representation of reality. Consequently, the major satirical subjects will be identified through an examination of the major themes. Finally, the role of the narrator and the characters must be considered, as well as the novel's style, for the satirical effects they yield.

The question to be dealt with first concerns the presence of science fiction. Since the science fiction element is only part of the whole form, does the novel qualify for analysis in the present thesis? This problem has not been encountered before, because Player Piano clearly belongs to the tradition of dystopian science fiction and The Sirens of Titan is undoubtedly a science fiction book, since it utilizes all the materials of classic science fiction. On the other hand, Mother Night is not considered at all here, since it is totally devoid of science fiction.

James Goshorn finds little trace of science fiction in Cat's Cradle.[7] He only cites one reference to a science fiction writer who is in prison for having killed his brother. He writes a book about the end of the world caused by a terrific bomb in the year 2000 A.D.(which is his novel's title, too) and asks Dr. Felix Hoenikker for technical advice. Goshorn seems to ignore the most significant characteristic of science fiction in the book, namely ice-nine, probably because it is neglected for most part of the narration except for a couple of authorial hints which remind the reader of its existence. Even when it is introduced, it is only

spoken of in hypothetical terms. In the end, however, it is utilized by the author to bring about the terrible cataclysmic catastrophe in typical science fiction fashion. The effects of ice-nine, therefore, are felt in the end of the story and are essential in the creation of the apocalyptic feeling of the work. Ice-nine, then, does have a central role in the structure and must not be ignored.

Ice-nine is introduced as the latest invention of Nobel Prize physicist, Dr. Hoenikker who is said to be one of the fathers of the atomic bomb. This substance has the ability to convert simultaneously any amount of liquid it comes in contact with into solid ice with a melting point of 114° Fahrenheit. It was created at the request of the military so that the problem of mud could be eliminated, but in the hands of irresponsible people it causes the destruction of the entire world by freezing.

With reference to Donald Wollheim's classification of science fiction, Cat's Cradle does qualify as a science fiction novel belonging to his third category of "Remarkable Inventions."[8] This category includes stories taking place in the present where it is assumed that something new has been discovered. The theme of the "mad scientist" and his "experiment gone wrong" is one of the classic ones in science fiction. Vonnegut combines this with the universal catastrophe motif which is most usual in postwar novels with emphasis on environmental topics. In fact, there is a whole trend of catastrophe science fiction novels which, as Susan

Sontag points out in her essay "The Imagination of Disaster," probably derive from a reaction against the trauma of the Bomb. James Lundquist cites Cat's Cradle among novels of this kind:

> Cat's Cradle is the most memorable book to come out of this drift, but it was accompanied by a whole spate of catastrophe novels involving not ice-nine but snow (John Boland's White August), gales (J. G. Ballard's The Wind from Nowhere), plague (John Blackburn's The Scent of New Moon Hay), and vanishing oceans (Charles Eric Maine's The Tides Went Out).[9]

James Lundquist observes another characteristic of science fiction in Cat's Cradle. There is not much "science" in Vonnegut's futuristic worlds, and whatever science fiction motifs are employed, there is not much emphasis on their scientific explanation. In Cat's Cradle, however, as Lundquist writes, "Vonnegut plays things straighter: . . . with ice-nine, at any rate, Vonnegut provides a technical lecture that makes Cat's Cradle read at times more like hard-core science fiction than any of Vonnegut's other novels."[10] Every science fiction writer is allowed to make a fantastic assumption which he may dress in true scientific, or (as it usually happens) in pseudo-scientific theory. He then proceeds to extrapolate the potentials of such a hypothesis to his own advantages. The lecture delivered by Dr. Asa Breed, who had worked with Dr. Hoenikker, makes that fantasic assumption: "There are several ways . . . in which certain liquids can crystallize--can freeze--several ways in which their atoms can stack and lock in an orderly, rigid way."[11]

This need only be compared with a similar lecture in Wells's The Time Machine in order to show that Vonnegut works in a conventional, Wellsian, one might say, manner. In his lecture about time the Time Traveller says: "There is no difference between Time and the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it . . . ."[12] The question is why Vonnegut is using the realistic method of scientific precision in Cat's Cradle while in the previous novels he never bothers to make his "science" authentic. The answer is that Cat's Cradle differs from the other novels because it is built on different levels of reality. Of course, the fictitious base of the novel is always emphasized. The opening epigram of the book reads: "Nothing is true in this book." Nevertheless, the novel is divided in two halves, and the first half is more "real" than the second, as the setting is the United States we know. The names of Ilium, New York, Indiana, Cornell, Cape Cod, and Hiroshima are mentioned. The reader is given slices of life from the private life of Dr. Hoenikker's family, and the people of Ilium. Therefore, the fantastic discovery of ice-nine must also appear to be "real" although it is impossible theoretically.[13]

Thus, unlike the other novels, the science fiction element here is described in the words of a scientist and not by the author. It is carefully dressed in a lecture so that the suggestion of authentic science makes it credible. Then, as the setting changes and all the characters find themselves on the island of San Lorenzo, the novel is eleva-

ted to a purely fantastic level. San Lorenzo is totally fantastic, but Vonnegut describes it in the realistic mode of Swift. He gives its geographic location (somewhere in the Caribbean), he gives its exact size (fifty miles long--twenty miles wide), its population, its history, its religion, even its language. "By creating a language and history for the island of San Lorenzo," Goshorn notes, "Vonnegut manages to create a setting where nearly anything can happen."[14]

The transition from the "real" level to the fantastic is made easy by the device of the "Jonah" figure which is manifest mainly in the person of the narrator as well as in other characters like Franklin Hoenikker and Lionel Boyd Johnson. The narrator, John-Jonah thinks he is driven by unknown forces from place to place--from the real world of America to the fantastic island of San Lorenzo. Frank builds a model of an island on plywood and eventually finds himself on the shores of that island after some adventures he has with gangsters. Also, Bokonon wanders about the whole world and finally is washed up on the rocks of San Lorenzo as if some unknown force, for whatever reason, tried to get him there. The different alignment of reality and fantasy in the same context has a special function. As Glenn Meeter observes, the irony in Vonnegut derives not only "from the continued tension between tone and material (as in Swift and Twain) but, still more importantly, from the tension between two <u>kinds</u> of material, one fantastic and the other real."[15] And Tony

Tanner notes that "the workings of fantasy in this novel are so potent that. . . . the facts displace the fiction or the fiction becomes the fact, in a neatly inextricable way."[16] For example, the narrator, who is a writer, intends to write a book entitled The Day the World Ended and eventually ends up experiencing the actual end of the world. Ice-nine, the invention of Dr. Hoenikker is only hypothetically spoken of, but in the end it does prove to exist and it upsets our belief in the stability of nature. The molecules of water have learned to "stack and lock" in a different, rigid way! Franklin's "little fantastic country" has so many compelling details that it looks real to the narrator. It proves to be the island of San Lorenzo. Life in San Lorenzo has changed after Bokonon and McCabe dreamed of establishing their utopia. "Foma," Bokonon's invention, are useful lies that help to divert the people's minds from their poverty and misery. On the other hand, facts replace fiction as the people remain poor, ugly, and sick despite Bokonon's urge: "Live by the foma that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy." By placing the fantastic and the real side by side in this novel, Vonnegut achieves the effect of the total obliteration of the lines between illusion and reality, so that in the end we do not know what is real and what fantastic. The effect is that the whole novel becomes a fantasy.

The fantastic quality of the book is further enhanced by the deliberate presentation of its form as clearly fictional. The very first line of the novel is an allusion to

Melville's Moby Dick and to the Old Testament Book of Jonah. Critics have much discussed the opening sentence--"Call me Jonah"--as it implies the fictional base of the novel. Peter Reed has some stimulating thoughts about its function:

> Melville's opening seeks to evoke verisimilitude by introducing us to a narrator who seems real and who recounts a true story which could be as if it had actually happened. By contrast, Vonnegut immediately invokes a famous novel and an improbable Old Testament story . . . as if to insist that the narrator is purely a fictional persona and his story all make-believe.[17]

In that respect, Reed continues, Cat's Cradle works like a theatre piece where the actors stop acting to address the audience directly and talk about their roles. One such play is Vonnegut's own Happy Birthday, Wanda June.

Also, the unreality of the novel is revealed by the structure itself. There are three different narrative levels as there seem to be three different writers at work. First, there is Vonnegut himself who creates the novel. But within the novel he creates there is another writer, Jonah, who narrates his own story. The story includes the Books of Bokonon written by another writer, Bokonon. The reader is lost in the three narrative levels and does not know which of the three to believe in, until all the loose ends are cleverly tied together toward the end of the novel. The device of regressus in infinitum is used here as in The Sirens of Titan for creating artificial worlds of varying degrees of reality. Vonnegut resembles other contemporary writers like Borges or Nabokov who use the device of regressus in infinitum or the

moral paradox in order to remind the reader of the "fictitious aspect of our own existence." As Glenn Meeter remarks, "Vonnegut like Borges has imagined an 'alternative world' to which his stories allude; and like Borges he makes his fictions out of such allusions. Cat's Cradle might be described as a series of allusions to the imaginary books of Bokonon."[18]

Another case in which the artificiality of the book is obvious is in the open ending. Unlike the kind of ending we expect in a representational novel, we do not know here what is the narrator's final act. Bokonon suggests to him that he climb Mount McCabe and make a statue of ice-nine of himself, but Bokonon always teaches lies and warns that nobody should take his advice. We do not know whether Jonah really does that, we are only led to assume he does. As Peter Reed points out,

> The ending reminds us again that we are in a fiction, that it is all a literary game . . . It would be hard to count how many stages away from "reality" we are by that time--and it really does not matter. The end of Bokonon's book is the end of Jonah's is the end of Vonnegut's. Artifice upon artifice.[19]

The role of fantasy in the novel is much the same as that of science fiction in the first two works. With the techniques and motifs of science fiction Vonnegut manages to establish a detached point of view, "a kind of cosmic cool,"[20] as Raymond Olderman defines it, through which the fundamental problems of man's existence can be examined. The fantasy quality of the form, especially in The Sirens of Titan, gave

that novel a sense of naive wonder, a sense of the childlike which helped neutralize the bleakness and negativism of life in the novel. In this work, the role of science fiction is admittedly not as predominant; combined, however, with the overall fantasy, it manages to convey the "cosmic cool" viewpoint. It is the fantasy in this novel that induces the reader to willingly suspend his disbelief and indulge in the cosmic perspective of the world as Vonnegut presents it. The "fantastic universe" of San Lorenzo is Vonnegut's "alternative world" which provides that larger perspective. This is specifically manifest in Bokonon's religion, and in the fantastic figure of Bokonon himself. Indeed, Bokonon, of all the characters, has a mature view of man's frustrating reality.

The universe, as presented through Bokonon's fable is indifferent to man, and whatever elaborate patterns and explanations man imposes on it, it is not likely to yield any meaning. Bokonon is able to see man's frightful reality. Since the individual is deprived of absolute knowledge, Bokonon believes, it is better for one not to waste one's life speculating about it, but pretend to understand it. Olderman aptly remarks that "[Vonnegut's] idea of the universe and man's role in it is somewhat Swiftian for he pictures us as modern Lilliputians, claiming big things for ourselves in a universe too immune to be anything but indifferent."[21] Bokononism is then Vonnegut's satirical medium for a criticism of "Lilliputian pride" and nearsightedness which eventually

leads to self-annihilation as it happens in Cat's Cradle.

It is important at this point to consider how effectively the symbol of cat's cradle expresses man's meaningless existence. The image of cat's cradle can be seen as man's unsuccessful attempts to impose meaning on the world around him and justify his role in it. In this endeavor man is assisted either by science or religion. The good, however, of either science or religion is eventually as illusory as a cat's cradle. There is no damn cat, no damn cradle in a cat's cradle as little Newt sees it; only a bunch of X's between somebody's hands. (114) Life remains plain and yet inexplicable like the string in the angular form of the game.

Another major symbol is ice-nine which Carlo Pagetti calls the most potent symbol in American science fiction and ranks on the same shelf with Hawthorne's scarlet letter and Melville's white whale. "Ice-nine," writes Pagetti, "is the terrible weapon destined to freeze the Earth and all its people, but it also expresses the frost in man's soul, the spiritual desolation of the modern epoch."[22] Pagetti also asserts that Vonnegut has inherited Hawthorne's and Melville's problematic morality and his use of the white (ice-nine) as symbol of horror and destruction shows that Vonnegut is very conscious of the traditional American symbolism.[23] Cat's cradle, representing the meaninglessness of life, and ice-nine, the spiritual desolation of the human soul, are the two main symbols of the novel. However, as Sam Vasbinder notes in his essay, "The Meaning of 'Foma' in Cat's Cradle,"

"[the novel] is a tissue of myths, fables, and symbols," which help as clues for the reader to understand Vonnegut's central philosophical idea:

> The use of a variety of mythologies to provide intellectual echoes in the plot and idea structure, . . . the elaborate use of poetry and quotations from Bokonon's writings that consistently restate the same point of view, and well selected images and action all re-enforce the idea that man is a divine creation but, as such, is a work of art in the physical realm only, not the spiritual.[24]

As in The Sirens of Titan, the author inserts in the narrative little jokes, incidents and legends that indirectly suggest the main idea of the novel. The Bokononist myth of creation (177), for example, illustrates Vasbinder's argument. The metaphor of mud implies that man is a creation, existing without essence, "a coherent, thinking, creative creation without immortality or power."[25]

If the meaning of the novel is correctly appreciated, it is based on this idea. It is an admonition on the part of the author for man to realize and accept his limitations, to stop commiting the Lilliputian hubris of explaining everything. Either due to nearsightedness, or pride, or even mere stupidity, man makes a wasteland of his world consuming his life in great causes and purposes which finally lead him headlong into total destruction.

An examination of the novel's themes will reveal Vonnegut's satirical targets. The main themes are science, religion and art; the themes of politics, history, war, patriotism, nationalism, undertaking, and sex represent subordinate targets. Basically, science and religion are satirized

because the truth of scientific knowledge and the belief in religious schemes, as viewed through the Bokononist perspective, are inadequate solutions to man's search for absolute truth. Since Bokononism is based on determinism (anyone is a fool if he "thinks he sees what God is doing" (13)), both of these approaches are futile and any answers they yield are "Foma."

Science is first on the list of the writer's targets, because the "truth" that is achieved through it is a bad illusion. People believe in science, for they believe in progress. Science, however, has been usurped by materialistic profiteering and militarism, and therefore, it not only fails to lead towards absolute knowledge, but it leads man dangerously toward self-destruction with such products as the atomic bomb and ice-nine. This deviation of the role of science is also revealed through the remarks of the scientists themselves. Dr. Asa Breed, for instance, unwittingly states that "new knowledge is the most valuable commodity on earth. The more truth we have to work with, the richer we become." (36) His son, who quits his research when the first bomb is dropped on Hiroshima, says: "Anything a scientist has worked on was sure to wind up as a weapon, one way or another." (27) Science fails to fulfill the essential human needs because it is exploited for non-humanistic purposes.

The most effective satire on science is achieved by Vonnegut's description of scientists as amoral, irrespon-

sible and indifferent people. This description best fits the scientist of the book, Dr. Felix Hoenikker. He is as amoral as a child. After the first test of the atomic bomb, when one of his colleagues remarks: "Science has now known sin," Dr. Hoenikker innocently retorts with the question: "What is sin?" (21) To him his experiments are simply games: "Why should I bother with made-up games when there are so many real ones going on?" (17) Hoenikker never shows interest in any person whether they are people working with him or even his family. "Not only had he never played with me before," Little Newt complains; "he had hardly ever even spoken to me." (17) Once he tipped his own wife after breakfast. Ironically, Hoenikker's lack of interest in people or life is summed up by an undertaker:

> Sometimes I wonder if he wasn't born dead. I never met a man who was less interested in the living. Sometimes I think that's the trouble with the world: too many people in high places who are stone-cold dead." (53)

This criticism of the scientist's detachment from human affairs is further repeated in the character of Hoenikker's eldest son. Like his father, Frank is not good at facing the public and refuses the presidency of San Lorenzo, "preferring," as Peter Reed aptly puts it, "to play Dr. Strangelove to someone else's president."[26] Like his father, the narrator observes, Frank wants "to receive honors and creature comforts while escaping human responsibilities." (151) On another occasion Frank is again shown to evasively disassociate himself from the mess that his portion of

ice-nine has caused. (162) Vonnegut attacks the typical irresponsibility of the scientist who evades his responsibilities by "identifying himself, with growing pride and energy, with the purifiers, the world savers, the cleaners-up." (162) Perhaps the best satirical comment on science is given by a former nazi scientist, Dr. Von Koeningswald, who is atoning for his Auschwitz crimes on San Lorenzo: "I am a very bad scientist. I will do anything to make a human being feel better, even if it's unscientific. No scientist worthy of the name could say such a thing." (148) The implication in Koeningswald's statement is that it must be taken for granted that scientific knowledge applies only to non-humanistic purposes. Science has failed to fulfill its purpose due to human nearsightedness, callousness and stupidity. It has been given infinite adulation to satisfy the whimsical, amoral aspirations of scientists whose discoveries are used in inhumane and selfish ways. The "truth" of science is illusory.

So is the "truth" of history and a number of other minor subjects which are treated with similar derision: nationalism (Hazel's "Hoosiers" who are in charge of everything all over the world); patriotism and war (the farcical sacrifice of the Hundred Martyrs to Democracy); capitalism (Crosby's plans to invest in a Christian, freedom-loving, non-communist country); and politics ("papa's" dictatorship). Bokonon uses a very descriptive term to characterize these institutional follies. They are all granfalloons.

Since science is proved to fail as a pretentious system of belief, Vonnegut presents through Bokononism a diametrically different approach based on the dialectical opposite of truth, that is lies. In fact, Bokononism was born as a reaction against truth when the idealists McCabe and Bokonon realized that their utopian dream of developing San Lorenzo had failed. Julian Castle gives an account of the beginning of the invented religion:

> "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's unorthodox approach is based on his cosmic theory of determinism. As several terms of his religion imply, he believes in inevitable destiny. "As it happened," becomes in Bokononism "as it was supposed to happen." Zahmahkibo means fate or inevitable destiny. Similarly, a karass is a team of people organized to do "God's will without ever discovering what they are doing." (11) Since life is determined by incomprehensible forces, according to Bokonon, it is much better for man to pretend he understands them than try to discover how everything works. In this way his Foma are useful lies in contrast with the truth of science which, as Robert Scholes puts it, is "a truth that kills."[27] From a practical point of view, Bokonon's "lies" succeed where scientific truth fails. People on San Lorenzo do find a comfort in Bokonon's religion because it diverts them from the

terrible reality. Boko-maru, the religion's rite, is presented as a successful way of bringing the souls of people together and relieving them from their alienation.

Bokonon accepts the relativity of good and evil and applies it to his religion. In one of his "Calypsos" he says:

> "Papa" Monzano, he is so very bad,
> But without bad "Papa" I would be so sad,
> Because without "Papa's" badness
> Tell me if you would
> How could wicked old Bokonon
> Ever, ever look good? (74)

Vonnegut applies Bokononism's relativity of good and evil in his interplay of ideas and the lies of religion are favored as good illusions in contrast with the truths of science which are considered bad illusions.

Within the general context, however, religion is satirized as another illusory system of belief. Bokonon himself derides any religion, his own included. He warns his followers never to believe in him because his religion, like any other, is a "pack of Foma." To him, religion, like science and politics is a pretentious institution which professes to provide answers to insoluble problems. The satire on religion in Cat's Cradle is manifest in San Lorenzo's reverse theocracy. Bokononism was established on the island as a means of supporting its government. By agreement with his partner McCabe, Bokonon assumed the role of the prophet and, by his suggestion, he was outlawed and Bokononism was forbidden in order to give the religion "more zest, more tang."

McCabe became the tyrant of the city, while Bokonon was the holy man in the woods. Death by the hook was introduced as a means of punishment and fear; it is clearly a parody of the lions and the martyrs' torture of early Christianity. The burlesque of religion and politics further derives from Bokonon's theory of Dynamic Tension. By pitting good against evil (the good saint-in-the-jungle versus the evil tyrant-in-the city) Bokonon believes that good societies can be built, if the tension between the two is kept high at all times. Bokonon's theory is deflated, however, by the narrator's comment that he borrowed it from Charles Atlas's muscle-building teaching technique: "a good body can be built by pitting one set of muscles against another." (74)

Religion is derided in several other ways. For example, Dr. Vox Humana, a former Christian priest, has received his degree from the Western Hemisphere University of the Bible of Little Rock, Arkansas, contacted through the classified ads of Popular Mechanics. He enriches his rituals with pagan elements (knife, live chicken) in order to "Make Religion Live" which was the motto of his Alma Mater. (145) Finally, Dr. Von Koeningswald remarks that he agrees with only one of Bokonon's ideas: "That all religions, Bokononism included, are nothing but lies." (148)

The function of literature and art generally is similar to that of religion in providing the lies necessary to face the blackness of reality. The novel is full of writers and artists who with their creations justify Bokonon's credo that

we live among versions of fiction. On the other hand, they also justify Bokonon's axiom, as Tony Tanner observes, "that man has to tell himself he understands life even when he knows he doesn't. This is the justification for constructing fictions, for the necessity of art."[28] The function of the artist, therefore, is to provide the lies of art to sustain his weaker fellow humans. "When a man becomes a writer," the narrator says, "he takes on a sacred obligation to produce beauty and enlightment and comfort at top speed . . . ."(156) Truth is nowhere mentioned. At another point the narrator indicates the similarity of the function of art to that of religion: "Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either." Like religion, literature and art in general are satirized with the implication that their only use is remedial. At one point the narrator is mistaken for a drug salesman: "I'm not a drug salesman. I'm a writer," he says to Philip Castle, who responds: "What makes you think a writer is not a drug salesman?" (106) The implication here is that literary works are as comforting as aspirin. The lie of art, Olderman suggests, helps our suspension of disbelief "in order to go on living in a world dominated by science, slaughter, and an infinite number of irresponsible everyday atrocities."[29]

The fact that the novel reeks from the absurdity of insane scientists and cynical creators of deliberate lies, the sketch of the protagonist as a "Jonah" figure driven from one member of his <u>karass</u> to another, the absense of a posit-

ive denouement in the end and the black humorous ending have caused critics to mistake Vonnegut's intentions. It is hard to accept a reading of the book as the acceptance of life as a joke.[30] Vonnegut means more than that. John May asserts that "Vonnegut holds at least one thing sacred and that is man. . . . Bokononism, cutting religion and man down to size, is the contour of our hope. And if the hope is slender, it is nevertheless genuine."[31]

Still Vonnegut's intentions can be better explained through the technique of his satire. In order to understand this technique a brief examination of the novel's characters and especially the role of the narrator is in order at this point.

The characters in Cat's Cradle are clearly types used as ironic reflectors of ideas. Given the fragmentation of the plot they are scarcely more than mere caricatures or character sketches. As Goshorn points out, "there are few long incidents to create any intensity of feeling. The narrator is involved with a wide variety of character types in many incidents which are only briefly described."[32] Much grotesque satire derives from the caricatures in those incidents, while the incongruity of comic situations and the irony of the deflated ideas creates burlesque satire. Almost every character is used to reflect on the main problem of dehumanization created as a result of the misuse of science. Incidents involving scientists and engineers, militarists and patriots, industrialists and capitalists show people reducing them-

selves or being reduced to objects. The attack on science is the obvious thesis layer of satire. Thomas Wymer, however, indicates that "of more importance to the critical understanding of Vonnegut's satiric technique is the antithesis layer, those characters who are the major spokesmen for attack, the narrator and Bokonon."[33]

Both the narrator and Bokonon become the mouthpiece of satire on science. John, using the Bokononist perspective, exposes the illusory truth of science. He makes broad comments about the amorality of scientists and engineers who escape human responsibilities and descend in spiritual oubliettes. The narrator, however, although he is the protagonist, has a limited vision of the world around him which is further blinded by his own desires. We see how he falls in love with the image of Mona in a magazine and how he wants to use her as a personal object of love. The discrepancy between his thoughts and his actions yields the most potent irony in the novel and, therefore, the narrator is not simply the mouthpiece but also the butt of the author's satire. Bokonon's character is not delineated in such an ironic manner as John's is, because he at least can see the illusory character of any religion, Bokononism included. The narrator is very much like Rumfoord. He never outgrows his limitations. He is converted from a Christian to a devout Bokononist, and constantly uses Bokononism as a frame of reference for his social criticism. In the end it is suggested that he will contribute to the completion of the Books of Bokonon

by accepting Bokonon's last advice. This is the most ironic part of the novel, and failure to perceive this irony results in misinterpreting the book.

Because the narrator is presented as a rather sympathetic character, and being a writer, there is danger in identifying his attitude with the author's. Bokononism, however, even if it regards man as sacred, is derided as another "gimcrack religion," as an institution created by man in his futile search for purpose. The narrator, by blindly relying on Bokononism, shares the guilt of the process of dehumanization that such meaningless systems propagate. By accepting Bokonon's advice to make himself a statue, reducing himself to an object, John becomes unknowingly both an agent of dehumanization as well as a victim. The agent-victim pattern, which was so evident in The Sirens of Titan, is best represented in the archetypal symbol of Jonah. Like the Old Testament Jonah, who misses the true meaning of God's message, John with his notion that "somebody, or something has compelled [him] to be certain places at certain times" provides an excuse for denying the responsibility of his actions. Unlike Malachi, however, John remains blind to the end, unable to see the full implications of his role as Jonah. The author relies on our ability to perceive the irony of the antithesis based on the agent-victim pattern and to appreciate the moral message implicit in the ironic inversion: to aspire either to the "truth" of science or the "lies" of religion is equivalent to creating meaningless cat's cradles.

Paradoxically enough, one Bokononist term is best suited to characterize the efficiency of Vonnegut's satire as a reforming instrument. As the nihilist poet Sherman Krebbs is a wrang-wrang for the narrator, so Vonnegut can be said to be a wrang-wrang for his readers.[34] A wrang-wrang, according to Bokonon, "is a person who steers people away from a line of speculation by reducing that line, with the example of the wrang-wrang's life, to an absurdity." (59) Vonnegut adopts Krebbs's nihilistic technique but not his philosophy. As wrang-wrang, the author wants to steer us away from Lilliputian speculation by reducing that line with the example of the narrator and the horrible apocalypse. As Giannone puts it, "he directs us to laugh at the disasters brought about by scientific and political egotism in order that we may turn away from a prideful death-wish to appreciate what is good in the world and dear in other persons."[35]

The novel's style is characterized by the absense of adverbial clauses and a unified, linear mode of expression, since Cat's Cradle is much more fragmented and episodic in its action development than the early novels. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that each chapter is more like a comic anecdote in which an idea or an attitude is delineated. The action is similar to that of The Sirens of Titan with a series of surprises, reversals and bewilderments which are so characteristic of a satiric form. As in that novel, the author utilizes a mosaic of styles with the use of all sorts and means of expression: letters, poems, calyp-

sos, excerpts from newspapers, ads, jokes, clichés, songs, national anthems, books, statistical records, historical accounts, pictures, sculpture, rituals, dialects and speeches.

The role of comedy, moreover, is as important as in The Sirens of Titan for the achievement of absurd, grotesque, and incongruous effects. John Leverence points out the numerous aspects of traditional American humor that Vonnegut expertly puts to use here; some representative techniques are the tall tale, the Negro minstrel, incongruous language, the alazon-eiron relationship, the yarn spinner overwhelmed by his own tale, and many others.[36] The use of comic anecdotes is particularly extensive. Leverence counts twenty-eight separate anecdotes filling forty pages in the book; "the first part of the novel (Jonah-John in Ilium) is built around twenty anecdotes linked by a minimum of action and description. The second part of the book (the San Lorenzo section) uses eight anecdotes."[37] The characteristic of the novel's humor, however, is that it is more subtle and witty than in the earlier novels, and that results in the low-key irony which sometimes is even difficult to detect.

Cat's Cradle, therefore, displays Vonnegut's evolving literary and satiric techniques. It appears removed even further from the conventions of the representational novel with its fragmented plot structures and its artificial character. The key elements in the structure are the images of cat's cradle and ice-nine, while the conception of the narrator's role facilitates the Swiftian technique of the irony

of the antithesis. The satiric attack on every target shows more clearly here Vonnegut's method of eliciting positive effects in the reader by playing with their opposites. The novel is one of Vonnegut's funniest ones due to his powerful imagination and wild inventiveness.

The next chapter, which will deal with Slaughterhouse-Five, will reveal the culmination of Vonnegut's literary idiom, since it employs most of the techniques and themes of the previous novels in a still more complex but ingenious manner.

NOTES

[1] Reed, p. 119

[2] Giannone, p. 59, sums up the critical reaction to Cat's Cradle: "Critics have recognized the affinity among Vonnegut's first four novels; and seeing no advance in technique or change of theme, they tend to put Cat's Cradle aside."

[3] Karen and Charles Wood, p. 147.

[4] Giannone, p. 55.

[5] Meeter, p. 209.

[6] Reed, p. 120.

[7] Goshorn, p. 136.

[8] Wollheim, p. 16.

[9] Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation and Other Essays (New York: Dell, 1961), pp. 212-28. Also, James Lundquist, p. 93.

[10] Lundquist, p. 98.

[11] Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Cat's Cradle (New Yrok: Dell, 1963), p. 38. All further references to the book will be documented in the text with page numbers in parentheses.

[12] H.G. Wells, The Time Machine (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1968), p. 26.

[13] Lundquist, pp. 98-99, provides several side notes on

ice-nine and Cat's Cradle. He describes Vonnegut's conversation with a crystallographer on the possibility of the existence of ice-nine.

[14] Goshorn, p. 158.

[15] Meeter, p. 206.

[16] Tanner, p. 304.

[17] Reed, p. 124.

[18] Meeter, p. 206.

[19] Reed, p. 144.

[20] Raymond Olderman, Beyond the Waste Land: The American Novel in the Nineteen-Sixties (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), p. 198.

[21] Ibid., p. 192.

[22] Carlo Pagetti, "Kurt Vonnegut, tra fantascienza e utopia," Studi Americani (Roma), 12 (1966), 308.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Sam Vasbinder, "The Meaning of Foma in Cat's Cradle," Riverside Quarterly, 11 (September, 1976), 300.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Reed, p. 135.

[27] Scholes, p. 49.

[28] Tanner, p. 306.

[29] Olderman, p. 190.

[30] Scholes, p. 44.

[31] John R. May, Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1972), pp. 197-9.

[32] Goshorn, p. 157.

[33] Wymer, p. 256.

[34] For this idea I am indebted to John May, p. 192.

[35] Giannone, p. 68.

[36] John W. Leverence, "Cat's Cradle and the Traditional American Humor," Journal of Popular Culture, 5 (1972), 955-963.

[37] Ibid., p. 959.

Slaughterhouse-Five: Telegrams. . .

Time present and time past
Are perhaps both present in time future
And time future contained in time past.

(-- T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets.)

Everything was beautiful,
and nothing hurt.

(--Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.,
Slaughterhouse-Five.)

Slaughterhouse-Five is Vonnegut's most acclaimed novel. It is perhaps his most successful book, too, not only because it constitutes "a resolution of sorts to themes and techniques developing throughout his previous work,"[1] but also because Vonnegut combines many different components in an organic, aesthetic framework, surpassing in artistic quality all his former achievements. John Tilton calls it "one of the most artistically executed novels in contemporary literature."[2] The analysis will show that such critical evaluations are not exaggerated.

Slaughterhouse-Five is also more serious than any of his first five novels because he comes at last to a direct confrontation with his traumatic Dresden experience. "His close relationship to the subject," Donald Greiner remarks, "contributes to the noticeable seriousness of his novel."[3] In Peter Reed's opinion, the novel is "an attempt at integration, an effort to bring together all that Vonnegut has been

saying about the human condition and contemporary American society, and to relate these broad commentaries to the central traumatic, revelatory and symbolic moment of the destruction of Dresden."[4] Vonnegut himself commented that he worked for years on this book and that its completion marked the fulfillment of a phase in his life's work.[5]

Much critical attention has been given to the complicated form of the novel. According to Peter Reed, Slaughterhouse-Five "is an example of Vonnegut's tendencies toward the episodic and the digressive indulged to the extreme."[6] The novel is much more complicated and unsequential than Cat's Cradle. Like the latter, there is no sense in trying to classify it among the established, traditional genres. Its main subject matter seems to be the destruction of Dresden and the Second World War, but it cannot be solely characterized as an anti-war novel. The book's subject expands beyond the last great war to a discussion of all wars and the fear of possible universal destruction, as well as to a treatment of the dialectical notions of death and life; the fantasy parts of the novel dealing with Billy Pilgrim's time-travelling and the Tralfamadorian world introduce a diatribe on the nature of time and the perception of reality. Finally, although the novel as a whole is not autobiographical, it does contain autobiographical elements. They suggest the author's personal involvement in the Dresden fire-storm and his reaction to the atrocity. The first chapter, moreover, is as much about the author's life as it is about the diffi-

culty of writing a novel that can deal effectively (and honestly) with the intangible reality of our times.[7] For a book that seems to be several stories all told at once, it is very hard to think of a distinctive label that would do justice to its protean form.

In this chapter the major concern is the science fiction elements of the book. The most obvious one is Billy Pilgrim's trip to the planet Tralfamadore. In the story, Billy is kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians and is transported to their distant planet in a flying saucer. The incident of the abduction itself and Billy's stay there is only part of the protagonist's life story. As in Cat's Cradle, the science fiction part is only a sub-plot of the whole narrative. Nevertheless, Donald Wollheim's classification of science fiction can be applied here to aid the present analysis. Billy's case is a classic example of kidnap by aliens as found in science fiction stories and as such it fits perfectly into Wollheim's first category of "Imaginary Voyages."[8]

There is, however, another important science fiction component, which, like ice-nine in Cat's Cradle, is very imaginatively used as a structural element. This is time-travel, one of the most familiar devices of science fiction. Time-travel is manifest in Billy's condition of being "unstuck in time." From the very beginning of Billy's story, the hero is reported to have been "spastic in time," to travel erratically, that is, in the past, the future or back to the present without being able to do anything about it.

The function of time-travel is central to the narrative structure of the novel because Billy's story unfolds in jumps back and forth in time. Unlike the first two novels that rely on typical science fiction forms, Slaughterhouse-Five and Cat's Cradle utilize one science fiction device that gives shape to a more flexible form. The originality of Slaughterhouse-Five, however, is that its form allows the author's personal experience to be artistically arrested and intregrated within a broader depiction of the human condition.

In Slaughterhouse-Five, as in the other novels, science fiction is used as a means rather than as an end in itself. The time-travel device here is Vonnegut's technique of providing a detached perspective on human affairs, a means for authorial comment on contemporary life. As such, Slaughterhouse-Five belongs also to another of Wollheim's categories, "Social Satire."[9] The major characteristic in this category is the author's motivation to comment on his society by contrasting reality with his imaginary world.

As has been shown in previous chapters, the question of satire in Vonnegut's novels is controversial. Critics like Richardson, C.D.B. Bryan, or Scholes question the author's intent for reform because they feel that his novels, lacking the angry, biting and bitter Swiftian or Juvenalian tone, are not satires. Their observations about Vonnegut's tone are correct, but this is not a reason to conclude that Vonnegut's satire is inferior or that he lacks moral convic-

tions. Conrad Festa argues that the absense "of the acid invective, the bitter ridicule and the Olympian scorn of Swift's is obvious, but that does not mean that Vonnegut is only passively concerned about the follies and vices of men."[10]

Vonnegut's method is one of understatement, indirection and irony, and is as effective as the intense, Swiftian satire, seen by some critics as the only standard of excellence. Studies like those by Goshorn, Wymer, Tilton, and Festa show that Slaughterhouse-Five, at first considered the least satirical of Vonnegut's novels, is the best place to demonstrate the unique art underlining his satire.[11]

Goshorn asserts that Vonnegut's tone is low-key and quietistic, resembling more Voltaire's detached and dispassionate posture, than the intense and active attitude of Swift.[12] Wymer contends that his technique, nonetheless, is the Swiftian one of "presenting equally false theses and antitheses." "The trap one easily falls into with Swift," Wymer points out, "is the failure to perceive the irony of the antithesis. The parallel problem in Vonnegut is revealed in the kinds of judgements made about the question of whether Billy Pilgrim and his Tralfamadorian solution are to be identified with Vonnegut."[13] Some critics feel that the Tralfamadorian solution is the best that Vonnegut has to offer and see Billy as a hero surviving with dignity in an insane world.[14] Others find this solution inadequate and question Vonnegut's judgement.[15] Still others see both

thesis and antithesis as ironic but conclude that Vonnegut has no answers to give in an age of relativity.[16] A fourth group of critics recognize the master satirist behind his masks by applying a rhetorical analysis and try to prove that the author's intent is to arouse in the reader concern for human values.[17]

The procedure of analysis in this chapter will be similar to that of the last group of critics. It is hoped that focusing on the role of science fiction will be particularly illuminating in the attempt to discover how Vonnegut's satire works in this novel. The objective is to show that science fiction is not only a key element in the structure of the book, but also a satirical vehicle for the author. The first part of the chapter will deal with how science fiction elements determine the shape of the novel's form, how they affect the "reality" of the novel and the narrative mode. The second part will focus on how Vonnegut uses this structure for the creation of the desired satiric effects. For this purpose, the discussion will be directed towards the satirical subjects, the role of the narrator, characterization and style.

In his attempt to confront his Dresden experience directly, Vonnegut needs to create an aesthetic framework that will enable him not only to communicate his personal reaction to the atrocity of Dresden, but also to measure the full actuality and the implications of the event within the context of the human condition. The role of art is of particular re-

levance in this endeavor; he comes to equate the problem of facing Dresden with the problem of writing about it. He structures the novel in such a way that it calls attention more to the process of reading about Dresden than to the story of survival itself. An examination of the novel's structure will reveal that his method is to refrain from any clear and straight delineation of the event.

Vonnegut's self-conscious approach to his own work is revealed even before he starts his novel. The title page provides three titles which undermine any expectations for design. Each title implies a major theme, yet the fact that three titles are given suggests the inadequacy of any one for this book. The first title (Slaughterhouse-Five) connotes that men are killed in the war like cattle. The second (The Children's Crusade) implies the falsification of language in the interpretation of historical events. The third (A Duty Dance with Death) refers to a state of mind towards art that Vonnegut shares with Celine: that "no art is possible without a dance with death."[18] Peter Reed observes that "'a dance' is an apt description for the interwoven patterns of the narrative, with the author himself occasionally appearing as one of the dancers."[19] The three titles, instead of giving a label, offer various aspects of the central theme of war, and reveal the author's attitude toward it. The title page offers further information about the author and his technique. It reads: "This is a novel somewhat in the

telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore, where flying saucers come from." From the outset, therefore, the author playfully attributes the book's form to his imaginary science fiction world. The playfulness is further enhanced by the typographical and formal layout of the page. As Giannone notes, "the title page looks like a poster"[20] with the outline of the words in the shape of a bomb falling.

The novel proper is divided into ten chapters. The first and the last ones deal with Vonnegut himself, enclosing the main part of the work, Billy Pilgrim's story, in an autobiographical frame. The opening chapter is another example of Vonnegut's self-conscious approach, as it becomes an authorial confession of inadequacy in dealing with his subject. Peter Jones remarks that,

> the authorial gimmick of discussing a feat while he performs it is not new to Vonnegut. Having feinted in this direction in Mother Night and Cat's Cradle, here he devotes the entire first chapter to the conception, history and execution of Slaughterhouse-Five.[21]

The destruction of a defenseless city which resulted in what Vonnegut calls "the greatest massacre in European history," is an event beyond explanation. His visits to Dresden after the war and to his war buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare, fail to bring back any memories. He tries to make a design for the novel's structure but it is no more than child's play. The lines of his daughter's crayons on wallpaper are almost an insult to the lives of 135,000 people killed in Dresden.

Any other information from history or travel books can only heighten a nostalgia for "The Florence on the Elbe." Even the world of art, Roethke's poems and Celine's novels, can only act as inspiration for an honest treatment of the subject. The Bible, used as a last resort for tales of disaster, offers the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example, but compared with the senseless and gratuitous firebombing of Dresden, it seems to be a just act.[22] The narrator admits with humility that he cannot solve his dilemma: On the one hand he feels the irresistible temptation to look back at Dresden (his reference to Lot's wife is an apt comparison,) and on the other, the Dresden part of his memory is useless. He concludes that his book is a failure because it was written by "a pillar of salt;" like Lot's wife, Vonnegut does look back, but is immobilized by the horror of the catastrophe and finds nothing intelligent to say.

The autobiographical memoir cannot be a viable form to deal effectively with the Dresden holocaust. The narrator realizes the misconception with which he began work on the novel. He had the impression that he could easily write about Dresden as all he would have to do would be to report what he had witnessed. Simply reporting what he had seen, however, would result in another documentary account like David Irving's The Destruction of Dresden. As Wayne McGinnis points out, "historical events like the bombing of Dresden are normally 'read' in the framework of moral and historical intrepretation."[23] The satire on history both in The Sirens

of Titan and in Cat's Cradle shows that Vonnegut distrusts the viability of historical interpretation of events.

Describing the firebombing of Dresden in terms of the traditional realistic novel would not do justice to the event, either; as Donald Greiner notes,

> In a century saturated with wars and threatened by the specter of nuclear annihilation, one more account of the horrors of war with realistic details and stacks of statistics would not express a personal sense of shock to a reading public inundated with daily reports of violent death.[24]

Vonnegut therefore considers the primacy of the imagination as the most viable means of facing the absurdity in contemporary life. He discards the conventional forms and avoids the proper development, climax and denouement of linear narration. Instead he turns to fantasy, creating a character who indulges in time and space travel and narrates his story in "the telegraphic and schizophrenic manner" of his imaginary science fiction world.

During Billy's abduction, a better description of the Tralfamadorian concept of the novel is given: their books are short, consisting of little "clumps of symbols" which function very much like our telegrams, each describing a situation, a scene. They are read simultaneously as one Tralfamadorian explains to Billy;

> We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between 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 cause, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvellous moments seen all at one time. (88)

This is in fact an indirect explanation of the form of Slaughterhouse-Five. It is as unusual and unsequential as the Tralfamadorian novels. There is no beginning, middle or end, nor any other cause and effect relationships, at least as one expects in a conventional narrative. There is even no suspense as the narrator summarizes Billy's life at the very beginning of the second chapter. One is tempted to associate Slaughterhouse-Five with the "plotless" stream of consciousness novel. This would not be a valid assessment, however, because the protagonist, as McGinnis notes, "is too effaced and manipulated by the author to have the kind of independent being required for the stream of consciousness novel."[25] There is simply no character development in Slaughterhouse-Five. The narrator comments that "there are almost no characters in this story and no dramatic confrontations, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces." (164) Besides, the time-travel device, on which the story is built, obliterates any sense of chronological continuity. Billy's life is presented in innumerable short scenes and incidents from different points of time, all spliced together giving the impression of concurrent events arrested in time. Tony Tanner observes the effect of this kind of narrative on the reader:

> In reading Billy Pilgrim's adventures, we too become unstuck in time; we lose any sense of chronological stability and the sense of sequentiality begins to fade. As a result one is left with something approaching the impression of seeing all the marvellous and horrific moments, all at the same time.[26]

Time-travel, therefore, is the informing principle of the novel's structure. Due to the otherworldly form based on the intricate time structure, Slaughterhouse-Five is a novel of "Tralfamadorian telegrams," a collection of fragmented materials with no apparent particular relationship between them.

No direct explanation is offered in the book as to how or why Billy becomes "spastic in time." The narrator implies that Billy probably invented the trip to Tralfamadore and the time theory, his imagination having been triggered by Kilgore Trout's science fiction novels introduced to him by Eliot Rosewater. Both Billy and Rosewater, the narrator says, "had found life meaningless, partly because of what they had seen in war. . . . So they were trying to re-invent themselves and their universe. Science fiction was a big help." (101) John Tilton devotes a lengthy analysis on this subject which supports this interpretation with strong evidence.[27] Ultimately, it does not actually matter whether Billy "really" travelled to Tralfamadore or everything was happening in his mind. Slaughterhouse-Five is so obviously a self-conscious game with technique that any explanations within a realistic context become superfluous. The novel's major structural pattern of juxtaposing all

kinds of material side by side indicates that Vonnegut presents his vision on different levels of reality.

For instance, the shift from the autobiographical to the clearly fictional and fantasy parts moves the reader from real life to fictional "reality" to utter fantasy. The time-travel technique facilitates a contrast of wishful fantasy (Tralfamadorian zoo) and brutal fact (the conflagration of Dresden). The names of the Kennedys are mentioned in the same paragraph with the names of the Rumfoords.(120) Real books and authors coexist with fictional ones: The Valley of the Dolls is said to be placed together with Tralfamadorian novels in a museum. The novels of Kilgore Trout are read as much as The Red Badge of Courage.

Slaughterhouse-Five surpasses Cat's Cradle in making fact indistinguishable from fiction as Vonnegut brings Billy Pilgrim to meet most of the fictional characters from his previous works. Tony Tanner succinctly remarks that "Pilgrim is not only slipping backwards and forwards in time; he is also astray in Vonnegut's own fictions."[28] Billy, who comes from Ilium (reminiscent of Player Piano and Cat's Cradle), meets with one of the Rumfoords and also with the Tralfamadorians (The Sirens of Titan); in Dresden he encounters Howard W. Campbell, Jr. (the protagonist of Mother Night); finally, after the war he has a mental breakdown and is committed to a veterans' hospital just like Eliot Rosewater, who, as "it was supposed to happen," lies in a bed next to him. Rosewater introduces Billy to the science

fiction writings of Kilgore Trout whom Billy happens to to encounter later on (God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater).

"The contamination of reality by dream," a technique constantly evident in his previous novels, is developed here even more thoroughly as Vonnegut himself enters his own work of art as a character. He does so both directly and indirectly. Indirectly, as he gives his protagonist his own birth date as well as several biographical details of his own life. For instance, like Vonnegut, Billy is drafted to Europe in the Second World War, is captured by the Germans and sent to Dresden, and finally survives the air-raid in ~~the~~ slaughterhouse number five. In this way the author attempts partial identification with his main character. Also directly, as Vonnegut in the first person intrudes into the main narrative at four different points insisting that he was near Billy. Bernard V. O' Hare, his war buddy was also present. At one point, to make the "fact" explicit, he says: "That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book."(125) As Tony Tanner points out, "here for the first time Vonnegut appears in one of his novels juxtaposing and merging the facts and fantasies of his own life in a book which almost seems to summarize and conclude the sequence of his previous five novels."[29]

The question is why Vonnegut prefers this method of unsequential, non-linear representation. Goshorn suggests that "clearly, in Vonnegut's novels, it is a matter of experimentation with technique. The effect is certainly to make

the novel less "realistic" in the older novel sense. . . ."[30] The distortion of space, time, and logic relationships results in a narrative appearing to move aimlessly, in a form lacking direction or design. Thus, the disorder and meaninglessness of twentieth century life that the subject matter of the novel conveys is communicated through the form as well. In that respect, the novel can be compared with Voltaire's Candide. The form of this novel does not appear to have any design either and reflects on the major theme which is that there is no design on life. The Tralfamadorian structure allows Vonnegut to lift the Dresden event outside the context of conventional time and space so that both his personal sense of outrage at the atrocity and its full implication can be sorted out. Robert Jay Lifton suggests in his study on the psychological condition of the Hiroshima survivors that the experience was "a dream-like affair"[31] and that survivors felt a sense of doom and unreality that shattered their belief in an orderly, rational universe. Vonnegut, as a survivor of Dresden, employs the science fiction devices as a means of suggesting this dream-like experience.

Actually, the advantage of the time-travel structure is that it allows the author on the one hand to create narrative distance by the use of his science fiction fantasy; on the other hand, he is able to suggest his closeness to the subject and keep its historical validity always before us by stressing his presence and by drawing factual information from historical accounts like those of David Irving or Harry

Truman.

Above all, however, the unrealistic method of representation in Slaughterhouse-Five is related to the satirical nature of the book. Highet calls attention to the importance of the representation of action in a satire:

> The central problem of satire is its relation to reality. Satire wishes to expose and criticize and shame human life. In narrative and drama it usually does this in one of two ways: either by showing an apparently factual but really ludicrous picture of this world; or by showing a picture of another world, with which our world is contrasted.[32]

The blend of the actual and the imaginary in the novel allows Vonnegut to adopt both of Highet's fictional techniques of satire. The war and the American scenes, for instance, project an image of "an apparently factual" world, which, when viewed through the science fiction perspective becomes ludicrous; on the other hand, the Tralfamadorian fantasy of the protagonist depicts a different world with which our own is contrasted.

In order to appreciate how Vonnegut utilizes these techniques for the creation of his satire it is necessary to abandon the complex temporal discontinuity of the narrative and pay attention to the nucleus of the novel. Again the polarity between the "real" and the fantastic can be detected in the thematic structure of the novel. Thomas Wymer indicates that there are two central thematic concerns in Slaughterhouse-Five:

> first, the presentation of the horror of war and its dehumanization of man, for which theme the

> central character Billy Pilgrim serves as the major example of victim; second, a kind of solution to this problem, a world view associated with extraterrestial beings called Tralfamadorians, for which Billy Pilgrim becomes the major spokesman.[33]

The satiric subject matter of the novel derives mainly from these two major thematic categories. Also, as Wymer points out, this dual thematic structure forms the basis of Vonnegut's irony of the antithesis. The first theme, man's dehumanization, which appeared in the earlier novels, forms the thesis layer of the satire and is quite obvious. The antithesis layer, on the other hand, poses great difficulties due to the ambivalence and ambiguity of its treatment. The major theme of the novel will therefore be briefly examined to identify the satiric subjects and to illustrate the author's double-edged irony:

The theme of war has been used in earlier novels but it was never given the centrality it has in Slaughterhouse-Five. Here it becomes the central metaphor for man's dehumanization and the meaninglessness of contemporary life. James Goshorn observes that the "the most effective contrast in the novel seems to be between the helpless sensitivity of the individual and the mass insensitivity to pain and destruction that comes from war."[34] The individual is presented as a pathetic, weak being, driven helplessly by incomprehensible forces. Numerous descriptions and incidents abound in the novel in which soldiers are anything but heroic figures. Aimless wanderings in the bitter cold of winter behind enemy

lines, prison camps and prison trains, enemies and allies hating each other, and above all, the conflagration of a beautiful city with its 135,000 inhabitants, these are the key scenes that set the tone for the Second World War. Everything is meaningless in war, and the destruction of Dresden, the central symbol in the novel, epitomizes man's unimaginable cruelty to man. Whatever the "logic" was behind the plan for the attack approved by the military or political authorities of the Allies, Vonnegut never tells. He suggests, however, with the dramatization of certain incidents and with citations from historical documents, that the morality of politicians, military officials and historians (Harry Truman, general I.C. Eaker, Bertram Copeland Rumfoord) is based on the "eye for an eye" mentality. The problem, Vonnegut seems to imply, is not simply the growth of technology that provides bigger and bigger weapons for mass destruction, but it is also the insensitivity of people in higher places who see revenge as a good reason to perpetrate even greater atrocities.

Another aspect of war treated in the book is the view of war enthusiasts who see it as a glorious and manly affair. This idea is derided with numerous devices such as the incidents of Roland Weary's "Three Musketeers" fantasy, Paul Lazarro's revenge plans, the use of sex as a symbol of man's virility, the references to the Children's Crusade. The novel is not a glorification of war as the narrator had assured O'Hare's wife. There is no part for "glamorous, war-

loving, dirty old men," like John Wayne or Frank Sinatra in this story. Instead, the novel goes a long way to imply that the soldiers being slaughtered in war are actually young men, almost children sacrificed to a sacred cause like the children in the obscene crusade of 1213. With the references to the Children's Crusade, as well as with Kilgore Trout's story about Christianity, religion becomes another satiric target. Both war and religion are seen as social systems in which the individual loses his dignity and integrity usually in the name of a great cause.

The depiction of reality in post-war America is no more hopeful. The landscape in certain parts of Ilium looks like the ruins of Dresden either due to black riots or urban renewal. Various references to Vietnam and to assassinations of political leaders suggest that violence still reigns supreme in our society. The book predicts future destructions. Chicago is going to be hydrogen-bombed by angry Chinese and America itself will be divided into twenty petty nations so that it will be no more a threat to world peace. Campbell's description of the quality of life in America, the richest nation on Earth with so many poor people, is very effective social satire. Egotism, materialism, runaway technology have created a waste land of man's life. The individual is left with no values, and like Billy's mother, he tries to make sense of his life with things bought in gift shops. Mental breakdowns and electro-shocks reflect the existential angst of our affluent society. Rosewater says to the hos-

pital psychiatrists: "I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful new lies, or people just aren't going to go on living." (101)

The somber tone which results from such a dark vision of life is further enhanced by the book's obsession with death. In the beginning of the novel the references to Lot's wife and to Celine are foreshadowings of the corpses packed in this novel. Death, not only from the violence of war, but also from the violence of peaceful times, from accidents and assassinations, and finally, plain old death, is pervasive in the novel. The effect is heightened by Vonnegut's refrain phrase "so it goes" after each mention of death.

In essence, therefore, the picture of life projected through the first thematic concern is quite bleak. As Gerald O' Connor asserts, the dramatization of the central themes of the novel show a world where "war is hell, religion is ridiculous, America is rotten, and the human condition is absurd."[35]

With the second thematic concern, on the other hand, the author attempts to balance this negative view of life, proposing the primacy of the imagination over the sterility of this waste land world. Goshorn points out that the theme of art in life, "the existential need to create values and act upon them," is central in Vonnegut's novels: "The uses of art to provide some purpose, some glue to hold together a man's sanity and his group identity, are persistent subjects of the novels."[36] The multiplicity of artists and their fic-

tional creations, often couched in some fictitious religious scheme (like Bokononism), or in some scientific fiction (like Tralfamadorianism) shows Vonnegut's awareness of the function of the imagination to provide some useful lies that help sustain the individual in the midst of nothingness. In Cat's Cradle, the writer is mistaken for a drug salesman. Vonnegut seems to be fascinated with the possibilities of fantasy, whether written or dreamed, to function as a drug to reality. As Tony Tanner succinctly puts it, "when the reality is the Dresden fire-storm, then arguably some drugging is essential."[37]

In Slaughterhouse-Five, the use of science fiction is certainly related to this purpose. Billy's Tralfamadorian fantasy is meant to be a kind of relief from the cruelty and horror of war, as Bokonon's Foma were meant to help the miserable citizens of San Lorenzo. Billy sees himself and his partner (Montana) in the Tralfamadorian zoo as a kind of new Adam and Eve in a heavenly paradise. The "Adam and Eve" theme is progressively built in the narrative as, for example,in the incident of Billy's capture by the Germans, or during the television film that Billy sees backwards. Given the cruelty inflicted upon Billy by familial, social, and political institutions, it is no wonder that he needs to escape to his Edenic paradise on Tralfamadore. The Tralfamadorian philosophy adopted by Billy provides him with a totally detached perspective. He learns to "ignore the awful times and concentrate on the good ones," (117)

The science fiction parts, as in The Sirens of Titan, have an atmospheric effect of comic relief in the narrative. Vonnegut himself emphasizes, in an interview, the mitigating role of his science fiction:

> The science fiction passages in Slaughterhouse-Five are just like the clowns in Shakespeare. When Shakespeare figured the audience had had enough of the heavy stuff, he'd let up a little, bring a clown or a foolish innkeeper or something like that before he'd become serious again. And trips to the other planets, science fiction of an obviously kidding sort is equivalent to bringing on the clowns to lighten things up.[38]

The basic function of science fiction in the book, however, is satiric. The science fiction stories of Kilgore Trout, interspersed throughout the narrative, are one of Vonnegut's means for social criticism. Using the detached perspective of outer space, Trout attacks many of the evils and follies of mankind usually in a comic manner. For example, his Gospel from Outer Space relates the visit of an extraterrestial being who finds a flaw in the Scriptures that explains why Christians can be so cruel. The scriptures do not provide protection for the helpless, poor, ill-connected people (the Billy Pilgrims of this world), because Christ was the son of God. He revises the Bible so that a mere nobody gets crucified instead of Christ and then God adopts him as his Son.

Billy's trip to Tralfamadore is also a vehicle for social criticism. He is presented as another Gulliver describing what a threat to the Universe Earthlings might be,

being so barbarous and cruel. The Tralfamadorians in turn consider his fears ridiculous. They know that in an absurd Universe, where everything is structured and determined by fate, such a logical projection is not likely to occur. They mock humans for being "the great explainers," especially when they know how limited and restricted the human view-point is. They also find it very strange that only on Earth there is talk of free will. Being able to see in the fourth dimension, they explain to Billy the "true" nature of time; for them, time is an eternal now. It does not change, and it does "not lend itself to warnings and explanations." Everything that is, always has been, always will be. Therefore, they can see the futility of trying to prevent or avoid events.

The Tralfamadorians, nevertheless, are themselves derided. Vonnegut's description of them evokes more than simply smiles. Two and a half feet high, these little green fellows with one eye in the palm of their hand look like "a plumber's friends." Their attitude is childish. When they experience ugly moments, their only reaction is to shut their eye to avoid them, very much like babies do when afraid. Their occupations are also ridiculous. They kidnap humanoids and spend their time at the zoo, cheering when their human specimens urinate or mate.

By employing both of Highet's techniques, Vonnegut manages to contrast two different world views: the limited Earthling view-point that is not much of a help in coping

with the absurd universe; and the Tralfamadorian world view, which allows us to understand the relativity of things but also countenances fatalism. What is then the "correct" solution to man's existential problems? On the one hand, it is implicit in the novel that man needs "the cosmic cool" as relief from cruelty and inhumanity in life. On the other hand, can one afford to live only aesthetically, to concentrate on the happy moments and avoid the ugly ones? Is this the author's position, too?

The answer to these questions can come from the examination of the novel's satirical structure, the narrator's role, the treatment of the characters and the author's stylistic devices. The ambivalence and ambiguity pervading the narrative indicates Vonnegut's unwillingness to give any clear answers. In order to penetrate that ambiguity it is necessary to discover the satirist behind his masks. Tilton notices various narratorial voices in the novel. At first, there is the first person narrator whom readers take to be the author himself. Second, there are the voices of the third person narrator.

The first person narrator who presents himself as Vonnegut-the-novelist myst not be confused with Vonnegut-the-artist. His self-description seems to be carefully calculated to inspire interest and trust in the reader--clearly a satiric technique which must alert the reader to see him as a satiric persona, the "vir bonus," who reacts to evil with the goodness and gentleness of a plain, straightforward

person.

The third person narrator, on the other hand, is completely unreliable. Most of the time, especially when he deals with Billy's fantasies, he is simply reportorial; he describes events as Billy has supposedly "told" him. At times, he makes a few editorial comments on Billy's life, but basically, as Goshorn points out, "[his] primary role in the novel is to provide narrative backgrounds and transitions between dramatic passages which are themselves fragments of Billy's past."[39] The narrator's function is limited because Vonnegut relies mostly on his technique of ironic contrast, of juxtaposing paradoxical and conflicting value systems negating each other.

Apart from these narratorial voices there can be also felt an artistic presence pervading the novel, a presence, Tilton notes, "to whom one must attribute the structural patterns--some quite subtle, others insistent--that because of their pervasiveness and significance make one aware of a controlling hand forming the whole of the novel."[40] Such patterns are not simply the recurrent clusters of images but also the juxtaposition of incidents in a way that, despite their disparateness, or because of it, they make indeed very good sense.

Pertinent to this discussion is the treatment of characters and especially that of the central character, Billy. As noted earlier, there are no characters in the accepted sense of the word. Most of the characters are clearly types

or two dimensional figures representing value systems which are manipulated by the author for satiric effects. Billy Pilgrim, although he is not a character in the old novel sense, is nevertheless quite complex and protean. What can be said of the roles that he is assigned to fulfill? Being at times an innocent Adam or a Christ figure, at others, a child of the "children's crusade," naive like Candide and gullible like Gulliver, he must also become a prosperous optometrist, a polished speaker in conventions and talk shows, and a "prophet-lecturer" of quasi-religious or scientific groups. Lundquist aptly remarks that Billy "has many personalities, many selves existing together at once. He is a living Tralfamadorian 'clump'."[41] It seems that all these different selves are deliberately given to Billy by the author so that he can become a kind of Everyman, a contemporary "hero" who, as his name distinctly suggests, "progresses" on a pilgrimage through an absurd world.

Yet, in the overall delineation of his character, two main traits are prominent: first, his role as a naif or ingénu type, a passive victim of enormous forces; second, his role as a "prophet," the major spokesman of the Tralfamadorian doctrine. When Billy adopts the Tralfamadorian philosophy, he becomes active, "prescribing corrective lenses for Earthling souls." But he also becomes insensitive and indifferent to the plight of his fellow man. Like the Tralfamadorians who avoid unpleasant moments, he himself avoids his responsibilities as a human being. For example, he

ignores a black man who tries to talk to him; as president of the Lions Club he applauds a major whose speech urges bombing Vietnam back to the stone age; he is passive to deaths he constantly witnesses. "In short," Wymer notes, "he blindly supports in every way consistent with his age and position all the forces which had brought him to Dresden. He is, in fact, a familiar Vonnegut type, the agent-victim."[42]

The agent-victim characteristic in Billy illustrates Vonnegut's technique of ironic inversion. As an ingénu, Billy is the best example of dehumanization by social and political institutions. As an apostle of Tralfamadorianism, he helps to demonstrate how apathy and indifference contribute to his own victimization. The derision of the Pilgrim-Tralfamadorian solution is built in the structure of the novel itself. Whereas the novel, built on the Tralfamadorian model, is supposed to offer us the possibility of seeing all the marvellous moments of Billy's life at once, there are actually few happy moments in it. With a series of recurrent images, Vonnegut presents Billy's life with numerous reminders of his unhappy war experiences. Images like "ivory and blue" feet, nestling like spoons, orange and black streaks, mustard gas and roses, the "four singer quartet," are carefully selected and juxtaposed in the narrative, so that they become a parody of the otherworldly form he has invented. For, while the Tralfamadorians advise Billy to concentrate on the happy times, as Wymer points out, "the ironic effect of the novel . . . runs counter to that view, insisting in-

stead that time past is contained within time present, that Dresden is still happening while we ignore it."[43]

Thus Vonnegut's major satiric technique is to present equally false value systems, letting them fall by the inexorable logic of their antitheses. He refrains from providing any normative solutions to the problem. Instead, he exposes the follies of the value systems of others. After all, James Goshorn comments, "attacking systems, not building them, is satire's job."[44]

Despite the grimness of the subject matter, the novel is not humorless. Vonnegut is a funny writer in all his books, and in this one in particular, as David Hayman observes, "he is able to treat situations from the gently humorous to the grimly hilarious, from the most banal to the horrible to the most incredible, making us smile in distress and sad about smiles."[45] His style is informal, conversational, with a great deal of aphorisms, commonplaces, and understatement. His irony is low-key. Hayman comments that "Vonnegut's refusal to raise his voice even when others 'yell' or bleed or burn or boil is consistent with his practice of ending prose sequences not with an explosion of wit but with a sombering thought or a dead fall."[46] An example of this is his use of the Tralfamadorian phrase "so it goes" after each mention of death. The constant reiteration of the phrase constitutes a superb satiric technique that undermines the Tralfamadorian doctrine of immortality. Surely, such a quietistic and apathetic attitude that dismisses the murder

of 135,000 people with a "so it goes," or equates the death of Robert Kennedy with the "death" of a flashlight battery becomes offensive and irritating. The repetition of so many "so it goes" emphasizes the fact that too many are dying in this world, and the ironic juxtaposition of important and unimportant deaths points towards the perverted Tralfamadorian concept of death. Vonnegut's technique of indirection is certainly most effective, for as Goshorn maintains, "by indirection Vonnegut achieves an intensity of reaction that direct statement could not command."[47]

As seen through the analysis in this chapter, the role of science fiction is still predominant in this book. Time-travel is most effective as a structural element since it helps the author to give shape to an organic form where he finds it possible to exorcize his Dresden experience and at the same time to deliver a masterful depiction of the human condition. Time-travel is also a very useful satiric device since it facilitates a contrast of the "real" and the fantastic on which Vonnegut's main satiric technique is based. With the irony of the antithesis, the author creates a dynamic tension through which the human predicament is fully experienced.

NOTES

[1] Jerome Klinkowitz and John Somer, eds., The Vonnegut Statement, p. 3. This is the thesis of both critics in their analyses of Vonnegut's first six novels.

[2] Tilton, p. 70.

[3] Donald J. Greiner, "Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five and the Fiction of Atrocity," Critique, 14 No 3 (1973), 4o.

[4] Reed, p. 172.

[5] Vonnegut, Wampeters, p. 280.

[6] Reed, p. 178.

[7] See Lundquist, p. 46.

[8] Wollheim, p. 16.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Festa, p. 136.

[11] Goshorn, p. 100, states that "Slaughterhouse-Five is the apt culmination of the techniques described in the preceding sections [of his thesis];" Wymer, p. 241, chooses Slaughterhouse-Five from Vonnegut's novels to discuss Vonnegut's Swiftian techniques; Festa, p. 144, also uses Slaughterhouse-Five to demonstrate how Vonnegut's satire works; finally, Tilton, pp. 97-98, writes: "The satirical dimensions of the novel fuse with the narrative mode and structure to give Slaughterhouse-Five a total organic form and thus a

total impact greater than Vonnegut has achieved in his earlier novels.

[12] Goshorn, p. 17.

[13] Wymer, p. 40.

[14] McNelly, pp. 193-4; Goldsmith; Meeter, pp. 204-20; Somer, pp. 221-54; see also note 15 of the introduction.

[15] Tanner, pp. 297-315; Kazin, pp. 13-15.

[16] Bryant, pp. 43-66; Harris, pp. 51-75; Scholes, pp. 35-55; Kennard, pp. 101-28; see also note 17 of the introduction.

[17] Tilton, pp. 69-103; Goshorn; Wymer, pp. 238-62; Festa, pp. 133-49; see also note 18 of the introduction.

[18] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five: Or, The Children's Crusade (New York: Dell, 1972), p. 21. All further references to this book will be documented in the text with the page numbers in parentheses.

[19] Reed, p. 179.

[20] Giannone, p. 83.

[21] Peter G. Jones, War and the Novelist: Appraising the American War Novel (Columbia: Univ, of Missouri Press, 1976), p. 218.

[22] See Giannone, p. 87.

[23] Wayne McGinnis, "The Arbitrary Cycle of Slaughterhouse-Five: A Relation of Form to Theme," Critique, 17 No 1

(1975), 56.

[24] Greiner, p. 48.

[25] McGinnis, p. 62.

[26] Tanner, p. 312.

[27] Tilton's thesis is that "time-travel, together with the other science fiction components of the novel, is a brilliant psychological technique devised by Vonnegut to interpret the life and philosophy of his created character," p. 71.

[28] Tanner, p. 310.

[29] Ibid., p.309.

[30] Goshorn, p. 130.

[31] Robert Jay Lifton, "Beyond Atrocity," Saturday Review (27 March, 1971), 25.

[32] Highet, p. 158.

[33] Wymer, p. 241.

[34] Goshorn, p. 78.

[35] Gerald O'Connor, "The Function of Time Travel in Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five," Riverside Quarterly, 5 (1972), 206-7.

[36] Goshorn, p. 110.

[37] Tanner, p. 314.

[38] Vonnegut, Wampeters, p. 262.

[39] Goshorn, p. 119.

[40] Tilton, p. 88.

[41] Lundquist, p. 80.

[42] Wymer, p. 249.

[43] Ibid., p. 247.

[44] Goshorn, p. 147.

[45] David Hayman, "The Jolly Mix: Notes on Technique, Style and Decorum in Slaughterhouse-Five," Summary, 1 No 2 (1971), 49.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Goshorn, p. 82.

CONCLUSION

It must be evident by now that Vonnegut does not employ science fiction elements for science fiction's sake but as a means for the expression of his cosmic vision. Each chapter in this study has shown how science fiction elements and devices are used as central and vital parts of the novels' structures. Perhaps the degree to which they are put to use varies from novel to novel, but in each case they are definitely integral parts of Vonnegut's unique satire. The fact that Vonnegut keeps using them even in his latest novels is an indication of how indispensible they are for the expression of his cosmically ironic vision. As James Lundquist puts it, "if there were no such form as science fiction, Vonnegut would be forced to invent it."[1]

Particular care has been taken in each chapter to comment on Vonnegut's literary development as an artist. From Player Piano to Slaughterhouse-Five he has been constantly experimenting with form and technique, always challenging the possibilities of his literary medium. The function of art as a means to face the blackness of reality is a standard theme in his novels. Hence the concern with so many writers and their fictional creations in the novels. Vonnegut's main difference from regular science fiction writers is that he is interested neither in teaching science nor in predicting the future but in depicting the human condition of the present. For a science fiction writer, Fiedler

remarks, "Vonnegut is oddly earthbound. . ."[2] M. Crichton also notes that Vonnegut's subject matter is really the past, not the future.[3] Being basically concerned with ideas rather than with characters, setting, and action, he constantly strives to discover the easiest channels of communication with his readers to make his "message" memorable and entertaining. The fantastic projections of science fiction are certainly part of that search for the best way to express himself most effectively. The evolution of Vonnegut's literary idiom can be seen, among other things, in the manner in which he uses science fiction. In the first two novels, for example, he borrows science fiction forms intact, such as the anti-utopia or the space opera formulas, for rather conventional, representational types of novels. From the middle novels on to Slaughterhouse-Five the narratives gradually disintegrate, the novels become fragmentary and unsequential, and he uses particular science fiction characteristics for the creation of more flexible and complex forms.

Player Piano, for instance, is the most straightforward and the least experimental of his novels. Relying mainly on the conventions of anti-utopia, Vonnegut creates a rather conventional narrative for an effective satire on the domination of science and technology over contemporary man. Nevertheless, even in this technically uninteresting novel, the attempt to transcend the conventions of the anti-utopia genre is evident both in terms of subject matter and style.

The satire turns from an attack on computerization to a critique of the human character. Implicitly the author suggests that first of all there is need to understand the nature of the human psyche before man undertakes any alterations of the physical world for a better life. Vonnegut's style also betrays the attempt to transcend the accepted convetions of the linear and representational narrative model of the mimetic novel.

The Sirens of Titan reveals a clear advance in technique. Vonnegut still employs conventional forms such as the space opera and comedy, yet there is ample evidence in the book of an extensive manipulation of these forms. The novel's strength lies in Vonnegut's vivid imagination and wild inventiveness to blend together various modalities from popular culture in unorthodox ways that result in a serio-comic satiric context. This combination of science fiction and comedy devices proves to be the most appropriate means for the burlesque of serious ideas as well as for self-parody. The parody of science fiction itself is an additional satiric technique that effectively reflects on both the subject matter as well as on the author's self-mocking attitude towards his fiction.

The narrator's playfulness and the overall fantastic quality of the novel function as mitigating elements that balance the nihilistic and despairing feelings generated from the pathos and suffering of the characters. Through his space odyssey Vonnegut describes ad absurdum the relativity

of values in the universe, but basically manages through the technique of ironic inversion to stimulate positive reactions in the reader. More than any other of his novels, The Sirens of Titan provides the most overt affirmation of human values in the midst of nothingness. The novel's predominant characteristic is its unreality, its fairy tale quality, which aids Vonnegut to establish a clearly fantastic world that further develops in the later novels as characteristically his own.

Cat's Cradle (and to some extent Mother Night) is the turning point in Vonnegut's development since he clearly moves further away from the conventional and representational type of novel. Being highly fragmentary and episodic in its plot structure, the novel contains little action which is presented in small incidents and anectodes with almost no intensity of feeling. The use of the unreliable first person narrator, the deliberate mixture of the fantastic and the real, the various authors at work, all these factors result in a totally fantastic narrative developed on different levels. The novel is obviously of a fictitious nature, a literary game with technique.

It becomes evident in this novel that Vonnegut no longer relies on borrowed forms but tends to create his own. The role of science fiction is less predominant here as the author simply employs one science fiction characteristic, ice-nine, merely in a subplot. Ice-nine is nevertheless central to the structure as it brings about the universal

catastrophe and the apocalyptic feeling at the end. Science fiction here is simply part of the overall fantasy that allows the reader to suspend his disbelief and be led by the author in the satiric attack on science and religion and a number of other minor "targets." Cat's Cradle is probably Vonnegut's funniest novel due to the outrageousness of its incidents, the effortlessness of its style and the looseness and flexibility of its form.

Finally, Slaughterhouse-Five is the culmination of Vonnegut's literary effort since he successfully brings together all he has tried to say in the previous novels and integrates it with his personal Dresden experience. It is more serious, more complete, more controlled than any of his past novels, one might say the novel of the Vonnegut canon. Fragmentation and unsequentiality is brought to an extreme. The complete obliteration of reality and illusion, achieved by the mixture of all kinds of material (fantastic, real, fictitious, factual) gives the novel an aura of diffuseness and unreality. There is a decisive return to the materials of science fiction, but this time they are structurally employed as shaping factors of the novel's form. Time-travel, the major science fiction characteristic in the novel, is the informing principle of the telegraphic and schizophrenic structure which sustains Vonnegut's satire. Billy's erratic wanderings in time is the most appropriate method for Vonnegut to demonstrate the helplessness of the individual before uncontrollable forces such as war. On

the other hand, the illusion he creates to offset the horrors of contemporary reality is not actually a solution, since Billy's unawareness and guilt-free attitude towards inhumanity and injustice propagate the very forces that had led him to Dresden. Vonnegut does not profess to provide any normative solutions to man's existential problems. He only implies in every one of his novels the need to be aware of the human limitations and potentials before we embark on ambitious schemes that bring about pain and suffering and possibly universal destruction. Vonnegut's concern for humanity is best expressed through Paul Proteus' exhortation in Player Piano: "The main business of humanity is to do a good job of being human beings, not to serve as appendages to machines, instutions, and systems.(297) Vonnegut's subject matter does not differ much in every novel. What is remarkable, however, is the formal means he ingeniously devises in each novel to provide a comprehensive vision of the human condition and to communicate that vision in the most effective and entertaining manner. In that endeavor, science fiction has been indeed of great help.

NOTES

[1] Lundquist, p. 86.

[2] Fiedler, p. 203.

[3] Michael J. Crichton, New Republic, 160 (April 26, 1969), 35.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Vonnegut, Kurt, Jr. Player Piano. New York: Avon, 1952; rpt., Bard/Avon, 1973.

_____. The Sirens of Titan. New York: Dell, 1959; rpt., Dell, 1972.

_____. Mother Night. New York: Avon, 1961; rpt., Avon, 1969.

_____. Cat's Cradle. New York: Dell, 1963; rpt., Dell, 1972.

_____. God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater: Or, Pearls Before Swine. New York: Dell, 1965; rpt., Dell, 1972.

_____. Slaughterhouse-Five: Or, The Childrean's Crusade. New York: Dell, 1969; rpt., Dell, 1972.

_____. Breakfast of Champions: Or, Good Bye Blue Monday. New York: Dell, 1973.

_____. Slapstic: Or, Lonesome No More. New York: Delacorte, 1976.

_____. Welcome to the Monkey House. New York: Dell, 1968.

_____. Happy Birthday, Wanda June. New York: Dell, 1970.

_____. Between Time and Timbuktu: Or, Prometheus-5. New York: Dell, 1972.

_____. Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloons. New York: Dell, 1974; rpt., Dell, 1976.

SELECTED SECONDARY SOURCES

a. Books.

Aldiss, Brian W. Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1973.

Amis, Kingsley. New Maps of Hell: A Suevey of Science Fiction. New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1960.

Ash, Brian. Faces of the Future: The Lessons of Science Fiction. London: Elek, Pemberton, 1975.

Berger, Harold L. Science Fiction and the New Dark Age. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1976.

Bryant, Jerry H. The Open Decision. New York: Free Press, 1970, pp. 303-324.

Clareson, Thomas D., ed. SF: The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1971.

Davenport, Basil. The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism. Chicago: Advent, 1969.

Elliott, Robert C. The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960.

Ellison, Harlan. Dangerous Visions. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1967.

Feinberg, Leonard. Introduction to Satire. Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State Univ. Press, 1967.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957.

Giannone, Richard. Vonnegut: A Preface to his Novels. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977.

Goldsmith, David H. Kurt Vonnegut: Fantasist of Fire and Ice. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1972.

Goshorn, James W. "The Queasy World of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.: Satire in the Novels." Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of New Mexico, 1971.

Harris, Charles B. Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd. New Haven, Conn.: College & Univ. Press, 1971, pp. 51-75.

Highet, Gilbert. The Anatomy of Satire. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962.

Hillegas, Mark R. The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967.

Hodgart, Matthew. Satire. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969.

Jones, Peter G. War and the Novelist: Appraising the American War Novel. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1976, pp. 203-22.

Kateb, George. Utopia and its Enemies. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1963, pp. 187-88.

Kazin, Alfred. Bright Book of Life: American Novelists & Storytellers from Hemingway to Mailer. Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1971, pp. 86-93.

Kennard, Jean E. Number and Nightmare: Forms of Fantasy in Contemporary Fiction. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975, pp. 101-28.

Klinkowitz, Jerome and John Somer, eds. The Vonnegut Statement. New York: Delta, 1973.

Knight, Damon. In Search of Wonder. Chicago: Advent, 1967.

_____, ed. Turning Points: Essays on the Art of Science Fiction. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Lundquist, James. Kurt Vonnegut. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1976.

May, John R. Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel. Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1972, pp. 172-200.

Moskowitz, Sam. Seekers of Tomorrow. New York: Ballantine, 1967, pp. 407-24.

Olderman, Raymond M. Beyond the Waste Land: The American Novel in the Nineteen-Sixties. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1976, pp. 189-219.

Paulson, Ronald, ed. Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism. N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971.

Pratter, Frederick E. "The Uses of Utopia: An Analysis of American Speculative Fiction, 1880-1960." Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Iowa, 1973.

Reed, Peter J. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. New York: Warner, 1972.

Rose, Mark. Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

Schatt, Stanley. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Boston: Twayne, 1976.

Scholes, Robert. The Fabulators. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967, pp. 35-55.

_____, and Eric C. Rabkin. Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977.

Schulz, Max F. Black Humor Fiction of the Sixties. Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1973, pp. 43-65.

Silverberg, Robert, ed. The Mirror of Infinity: A Critic's Anthology of Science Fiction. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Sontag, Susan. Against Interpretation and Other Essays. New York: Dell, 1961.

Suvin, Darko. Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1979.

Tilton, John W. Cosmic Satire in the Contemporary Novel. London: Associated Univ. Presses, 1977, pp. 69-103.

Walsh, Chad. From Utopia to Nightmare. New York: Evaston, 1962, pp. 85-88.

Wells, H.G. The Time Machine. New York: Fawcett, 1968.

Wollheim, Donald A. The Universe Makers: Science Fiction Today. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Worcester, David. The Art of Satire. New York: Russel & Russel, 1960.

b. Articles

Brunvand, Harold Jan. "A Classification for Shaggy-Dog Stories." Journal of American Folklore, 76 (1963), 42-45.

Bryan, C.D.B. "Kurt Vonnegut on Target." New Republic, 155 (October 8, 1966), 21-22, 24-26.

DeMott, Benjamin. "Vonnegut's Otherworldly Laughter." Saturday Review, 54 (May 1, 1971), 29-32, 38.

Engel, David. "On the Question of Foma: A Study of the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." Riverside Quarterly, 5 (February 1972), 119-28.

Fiedler, Leslie A. "The Divine Stupidity of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." Esquire, 74 (September 1970), 195-7, 199-200, 201-204.

Franklin, Bruce H. "Fiction of Science." The Southern Review, 3 (Automn 1967), 1036-49.

Greiner, Donald J. "Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five and the Fiction of Atrocity." Critique, 14 No 3 (1973), 38-51.

Hayman, David. "The Jolly Mix: Notes on Techniques, Style and Decorum in SF." Summary, 1 No 2 (1971), 44-50.

Hildebrand, Tim. "Two or Three Things I Know about Kurt Vonnegut's Imagination." The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 121-132.

Kiely, Robert. "Satire as Fantasy." Summary, 1 No 2 (1971) 41-43.

Lawler, Donald D. "The Sirens of Titan: Vonnegut's Metaphysical Shaggy-Dog Story." Vonnegut in America. Ed. Jerome Klinkowitz and Donald D. Lawler. New York: Delacorte, 1977, pp. 61-86.

Leverence, John W. "Cat's Cradle and Traditional American Humor." Journal of Popular Culture, 5 (1972), 955-63.

Lifton, Robert Jay. "Kurt Vonnegut: Duty-Dance with Death." American Poetry Review, 1 (January-February 1973), 41.

Mack, Maynard. "The Muse of Satire." Yale Review, 41 (1951), 80-91; rpt., in Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism, pp. 190-201.

McGinnis, Wayne. "The Arbitrary Cycle of Slaughterhouse-Five: A Relation of Form to Theme." Critique, 17 No 1

(1975), 55-68.

McNelly, Willis E. "Science Fiction, The Modern Mythology." America (September 5, 1970), 125-7; rpt., in SF: The Other Side of Realism, pp. 193-4.

_____. "Kurt Vonnegut as Science Fiction Writer." Vonnegut in America, pp. 87-96.

Meeter, Glenn. "Vonnegut's Formal and Moral Otherworldliness: Cat's Cradle and Slaughterhouse-Five." The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 204-20.

Mellard, James J. "The Modes of Vonnegut's Fiction: Or, Player Piano Ousts Mechanical Bride and The Sirens of Titan Invade The Gutenberg Galaxy." The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 178-203.

Pagetti, Carlo. "Kurt Vonnegut, tra fantascienza e utopia." Studi Americani, 12 (Roma, 1966), 301-22.

Richardson, Jack. "Easy Writer." New York Review of Books, 15 (July 2, 1970), 7-8.

Samuels, Thomas Charles. "Age of Vonnegut." New Republic, 164 (June 12, 1971), 30-2.

Schwartz, Sheila. "Science Fiction: Bridge Between Two Cultures." English Journal, 60 (November 1971), 1043-51.

Somer, John. "Geodesic Vonnegut: Or, If Buckminster Fuller Wrote Novels." The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 221-53.

Tanner, Tony. "The Uncertain Messenger: A Study of the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." Critical Quarterly, 11 (Winter 1969), 297-315; rpt., in Tanner, City of Words. New York: Harper & Row, 1971, pp. 181-201.

Vasbinder, Sam. "The Meaning of Foma in Cat's Cradle." Riverside Quarterly, 5 (1973), 300-2.

Wolfe, Gary K. "Vonnegut and the Metaphor of Science Fiction." Journal of Popular Culture, 5 (1972), 964-69.

Wood, Karen and Charles. "The Vonnegut Effect: Science Fiction and Beyond." The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 133-57.

Wymer, Thomas L. "The Swiftian Satire of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." Voices for the Future: Essays on Major Science Fiction Writers. Ed. Thomas Clareson. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1976, pp. 238-62.