

“NO DAMN CAT, AND NO DAMN CRADLE”: POSTMODERN MYTHOLOGY
AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A VONNEGUTIAN SOCIAL THEORY

by

Zachary P. Perdieu, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
with a Major in Literature
May 2016

Committee Members:

Robert T. Tally Jr., Chair

Allan Chavkin

Mark Busby

COPYRIGHT

by

Zachary P. Perdieu

2016

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Zachary P. Perdieu, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

DEDICATION

Vonnegut introduced the following letter to babies in *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater*, “Hello babies. Welcome to Earth. It’s hot in the summer and cold in the winter. It’s round and wet and crowded. On the outside, babies, you’ve got a hundred years here. There’s only one rule that I know of, babies – ‘God damn it, you’ve got to be kind’” (129). This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Barbara Wilson, for being my own personal manifestation of this “letter to babies.”

It is also for Dr. Steven Connelly. I don’t know where I would be if he hadn’t assigned *three* Vonnegut novels in his freshmen composition course at Indiana State University, but I can say with certainty that I wouldn’t be writing a dedication for my master’s thesis on Kurt Vonnegut.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis chair Dr. Robert Tally Jr., for showing me that there is such thing as a living, breathing, and most importantly *working* Vonnegut scholar. Without that confirmation, I might have been a modernist. Also, for his harshly fair comments and constant line of communication. Thank you to committee member Dr. Mark Busby, for introducing me to the incredible experience of archival research. Thank you to committee member Dr. Allan Chavkin, who, upon meeting me for the first time, appeared as excited as I felt about my research fellowship. Thank you to the Graduate College at Texas State University, for awarding me the Thesis Research Support Fellowship to fund the archival work for this project.

I'd also like to thank Tyler Dukes, for struggling with me every step of the way as she went about her own thesis journey, and to Jaye Dozier, for the constant communication regarding thesis deadlines. Thank you, Dr. Leah Schwebel, for telling me to find a critical discussion and enter it. Thank you to the Lilly Library at Indiana University, for having the most helpful and polite librarians in the nation.

Finally, thank you to my parents – Sherri, Paul, Jody, and Randy – for forcing me to acknowledge any success I find.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. “ONLY ONE PLANE”: NORMALIZATION AND THE MECHNIZATION OF HUMANITY IN <i>PLAYER PIANO</i>	14
III. “GREETINGS”: MESSAGES FROM THE PAST AND FUTURE AND THE LIFELONG MARCH TO MEANINGLESSNESS IN <i>THE SIRENS OF TITAN</i>	28
IV. “SEE THE CAT? SEE THE CRADLE?”: COMMUNAL SELF- DECEPTION AND THE MYTH OF IDENTITY IN <i>CAT’S CRADLE</i> ..	45
V. CONCLUSION	62
WORKS CITED	67

I. INTRODUCTION

Said Mentak notes that any critical study of Kurt Vonnegut requires the critic to “consider Vonnegut and most of his work as a whole” (269). The numerous books available which focus on large portions of Vonnegut’s life and work indicate that many of Mentak’s contemporary critics agree with his conclusion. Objectively, this seems like a rational and logical approach to take with any writer, considering a single work might be narrow in scope and thus fail to give an adequate perspective of that writer’s artistic vision. Even with this qualification, however, Vonnegut remains unique. Vonnegut’s work, his novels especially, are rife with recurring themes that frequently result in similar conclusions. Scholars have taken notice, with some, like Leonard Mustazza, going as far as arguing that Vonnegut’s work as a whole can be characterized by a single, defining sentiment. This might seem to argue against Mentak’s declaration that Vonnegut needs to be considered in aggregate, or inasmuch as, if one can discover Vonnegut’s thematic conclusion in one novel, it could theoretically be applied to his entire library.

The problem with this reduction of Vonnegut’s work is that it fails to consider the massive scope, progression, and growth evident during the author’s career, especially early on as he developed something like a Vonnegutian brand of social theory. Each novel is not a slightly altered version of the previous one, but an addition to an anthropological project that Vonnegut carefully fabricated and meticulously molded – what Robert T. Tally Jr. has called “a postmodern iconography,” or “a scattered and

critical portrait of American life at the very moment of its seeming transcendence” (3).

Recurring themes of freewill, normalization and self-deception (what I will refer to throughout this work as *granfalloonery*), are not only evident in the vast majority of Vonnegut’s novels, but they are informed by previous iterations of themselves and evolve in conjunction with the rules established by earlier versions.

Critical accusations of repetitiveness fail to acknowledge the thematic crescendo and tend to ignore the deliberateness with which Vonnegut builds his fictional universe. The recurring themes build from text to text. They reflect back on previous manifestations of themselves and predict future outcomes of similar scenarios. While Vonnegut certainly wrote individual and distinct stories contained within his fourteen novels (not to mention in many other short stories, plays, and essays), they were not each entirely contained within fourteen distinct worlds. Characters and places, like themes, reappear, and Vonnegut establishes rules that dictate future exchanges between characters and fate, characters and other characters, characters and their creator, and characters and themselves. Vonnegut constructed what Jess Ritter has called a “mythical modern universe” (38).

Mustazza asserts that there are two general types of Vonnegut critics: “those who regard him as essentially a ‘myth-maker’” and “those who have noticed and analyzed his use of conventional myths, classical and biblical” (15). This thesis will firmly place me in the former category, but it is not a distinction that I believe to require mutually exclusive alternatives. Myths are dependent and informed by the societal web in which they are spun. Mythic meaning is not universal, but subjective. Vonnegut creates a mythic world of and for his own post-war and postmodern America.

The biblical and classical myths which Vonnegut alludes to are in turn contemporized by the ideals of the society from within which the author writes. Furthermore, these conventional myths are so engrained in a contemporary audience's collective perspective that they are critically hamstrung; they begin to analyze what the old myth is conveying in the contemporary text, instead of analyzing what the new myth builds onto the old one. Mustazza and others are arrested by the past through their analysis of these conventional allusions, but as Vonnegut wrote in *Slapstick* (1976), "History is merely a list of surprises [...]. It can only prepare us to be surprised yet again" (255). Mustazza posits that many (if not all) of Vonnegut's stories are some version of the Fall, of Adam and Eve's fall from innocence, and that they are characterized by a longing to return to some Edenic state of innocence. This is an oddly restrictive lens through which to analyze Vonnegut's entire career, one that often brands meaning on the author's text instead of allowing the text to impart its own meaning. Furthermore, it implicitly indicts Vonnegut for the very act of repetition that is so reductively applied to his work by other critics, something John Updike (a friend and fan) calls "customary noises of exasperation" (40). None of this is to say that the allusions to the Fall, which Mustazza highlights, aren't present in Vonnegut's work, but Mustazza misunderstands just *how* Vonnegut utilizes such myths. This misunderstanding is tied to Mustazza's declaration that there are two types of Vonnegut critics in regards to his use or construction of myth, when the practice of either is not mutually exclusive to the other. Mustazza seems captivated by the idea that Vonnegut is telling the same story over and over, and the myth of the Fall becomes a critical catch-all instead of tool for interpretation of discrete texts.

Mustazza is not alone in his belief that the present and future that Vonnegut depicts is indicative of a humanity in search of an Edenic and lost past, or as Billy Pilgrim explains it, imagining the long chronology of human existence running in reverse, “All humanity, without exception, conspired biologically to produce two perfect people named Adam and Eve” (*Slaughterhouse-Five* 75). Jerome Klinkowitz describes the very past that Vonnegut himself might be searching for in a description of Vonnegut’s opening to *A Man without a Country* (2005), and in doing so Klinkowitz illustrates the problem with both his own and Mustazza’s assertions:

As a baseline for understanding the present, Vonnegut starts with his own childhood back home in Indiana. It surely was a simpler time with the prosperity of the 1920s enjoyed in the company of a large, financially comfortable, reasonably happy family. Father a prominent architect, mother a brewery heiress, older brother Bernard destined for doctoral study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a career as an atmospheric physicist, older sister Alice gifted in the arts and receptive to little brother Kurt’s appealing comedy. (3)

This is a sentimental and rosy look at a real life version of something very much intertwined with Vonnegut’s assertions of the usefulness of *granfalloonery*, which is the comforting nature of an extended family. *Granfalloon* is a term Vonnegut developed in *Cat’s Cradle*, and it is representative of the continuous attempt by Vonnegut’s characters to frame their personal narrative into a larger one, like that of the author’s own extended family from his childhood. This is an idea which Vonnegut dedicated an entire novel to,

as *Slapstick* depicts a system of government that assigns each citizen a new last name that ties them to an extended family.

Klinkowitz goes on to assert that this past informs the older Vonnegut, as if the good memories of the lost time hold the answers to the problems of the present and future:

For everything that Vonnegut says about the events of 2000-2005, especially the troubling uncertainty of what's going on these days, there's a grounding or contextualization in something Vonnegut knows, something he's experienced and reflected on, and which offers a clue to make things better (3).

Such a sentiment would stand in blatant contradiction with the circumstances of the majority of Vonnegut's work, however. The passing of time robbed Vonnegut of this security, as his sister died young, his mother went insane and committed suicide, and much of his family's fortune was lost during the Great Depression. The happiness Vonnegut knew as a child was a mirage, one that time proved to be false, and thus it is not a past glory for which Vonnegut pines, as Tally notes that much of Vonnegut's work "seems to admit that such comforting ideas of past glory are nothing but what Bokanon dubbed *foma*, useful lies" (6). The continuous search, the forever-pursuit in Vonnegut's novels, is not one for a former unity that has been fractured, an Edenic paradise, but for a naivety that distorts the truth, an amicable deviation from reality that allows for illusion, one which was present in Vonnegut when he was a child.

Billy Pilgrim's fanciful vision that all humanity is working to produce (or reproduce) Adam and Eve is embedded in a passage that depicts human function in

reverse, as if watching a movie running backwards. Vonnegut's conclusion, therefore, is that humanity doesn't operate that way, that it can't uncover some lost past.

Furthermore, given Pilgrim's understanding of time (informed as he is by the Tralfamadorians, who view time as a series of moments which are always active and available for revisiting), Eden should be a moment which humanity can look back on like the initial stretches of a mountain range in a panoramic snapshot, but no such viewable point is available to Pilgrim. Instead, he projects himself ahead to a modern Eden-like existence on Tralfamadore, one that is completely manifested by his own conflict with his circumstances. This gets at the core of how Vonnegut employs and creates myth, the former as a foundation on which to construct the latter, and the latter as a tool to carry out his anthropological study. Vonnegut understands that a mythic and mythologized past is exactly as hollow as a promised paradise in the afterlife, but that doesn't make it useless. It is a tool to wield in defense of an unsatisfactory and dehumanizing existence, as I will illustrate in the third chapter of this thesis.

Vonnegut is, therefore, both a "myth-maker and myth exploiter," as Mustazza puts it (17), but it is the purpose of both of these practices that Mustazza has misconceived. These allusions of conventional myths are used to jar social memory, to inform a reader of a maxim of existence on which Vonnegut will build his own myths, in the way Achilles's name conjures up ideas of blind rage and a quest for immortality in the *Iliad*. Vonnegut uses the collective understanding of such myths to build his own, and he in turn uses those to create maxims of postmodern human existence. Through these maxims he constructed a Vonnegutian brand of social theory.

The perceived repetition of thematic trends remains at the center of the critical derision and dismissal of Vonnegut's work, but such assertions are simply products of the very short-sightedness that Mentak advised against, and that Vonnegut himself was certainly not guilty of. When one of the recurring themes from previous novels appears in a new one, critics often reduce this to Vonnegut essentially rehashing a classic, like a once popular band on a reunion tour, what Peter S. Prescott called Vonnegut's "customary pose of satirizing attitudes that only Archie bunker could love" (40). In reality, Vonnegut establishes a rule for existence within his fiction with each of his early subsequent novels by which all future exchanges are dictated. The recurrence of similar circumstances acts as an allusion to the allegorical and parabolic myth which Vonnegut meticulously constructed on the backs of conventional myths in a previous novel. This allusion allows for an informed reader to apply an already established rule into the circumstances of the present novel, and thus allows for the author to establish new rules of existence that are affected by or affect the previously established ones. Through these myths, Vonnegut is constructing a connected universe as surely as Tolkien did with Middle-earth or Faulkner did with Yoknapatawpha County; Vonnegut simply is not beholden to the same narrative and chronological structure. Vonnegut's universe is not one constructed of family trees or indexed battles but of facets of humanity's nature which dictate all their actions. Paul Proteus's failed revolution doesn't have to prelude Winston Niles Rumfoord's own revolution in a fictional timeline for the established rules of *Player Piano* to apply to *The Sirens of Titan*. Paul Proteus's society is a parabolic myth, constructed like the stories of Achilles, Narcissus, or Icarus and used to inform the

reader of a very specific lesson, which can be alluded to in order to reestablish the tenet of existence in short order so that it can evolve or be built upon.

As Vonnegut's career as a novelist stretched on, the new myths he developed proved to have their roots deep in previous installments, strengthening the connective tissue of his universe. *Player Piano*'s hints of a mechanized humanity works as an origin story to the Tralfamadorians of *The Sirens of Titan*. Salo, one of the mechanized Tralfamadorians from *The Sirens of Titan*, foreshadows the mechanical men of *Breakfast of Champions*. Billy Pilgrim of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is retreading the steps of his life fully aware of what will happen next; he is stuck in the personal circumstances of what would later become planet-wide in *Timequake*. Humanity's poor evolutionary tactics displayed in *Galápagos* were long a subject of note in Vonnegut's work, evident by this quote in *The Sirens of Titan*, his second novel: "Imagine expecting the species to last for ten million more years – as though people were as well-designed as turtles" (36). Eliot Rosewater's distribution of the comforts that both his name and wealth bring to an entire Indiana county in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* is followed by the "Lonesome No More!" policy of President Wilbur Swain in *Slapstick*, which hands out a new family name to everyone in America – socialized granfalloonery, essentially. In this universe of connected plotlines and rules, Vonnegut would initiate his career-long experiment.

Vonnegut studied anthropology at the University of Chicago in the late 1940s, but his thesis was rejected. Years after Vonnegut left the school without receiving his degree, the school accepted his novel *Cat's Cradle* (1963), among other writings, as his thesis and awarded him a master's degree in anthropology. This should have been a beacon for critics and scholars to consider Vonnegut's work as something besides fiction, as an

intentionally developed cultural theory and a meticulously crafted philosophy. While some critics, like Shiela Ellen Pardee – who wrote that “Vonnegut immersed himself in a field of study [anthropology] that would influence the next three decades of his life with humanist philosophy and cultural relativism” (185) – have examined the effect of Vonnegut’s anthropological leanings on his work, a map of the social theory, wherein *Cat’s Cradle* is just one chapter of Vonnegut’s philosophical development, is still underdeveloped. This project will begin to close that gap.

Vonnegut’s career as a novelist began with four books, three of which add a significant revelation to an anthropological theory, and each new novel in the sequence relied on the established rules of the previous novels to construct its own addition to the field. Vonnegut’s *oeuvre* serves two functions, therefore: One for Vonnegut’s present, and one for humanity’s future. The previously mentioned “postmodern iconography” outlined in Tally’s *Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel* is the present function of Vonnegut’s career as a novelist, a “literary project” which “aimed to produce what Melville and others imagined the ever-elusive great American novel could accomplish: an expression of the multitude and diversity of American life in its time” (3). An analysis of this iconography reveals more than a snapshot of Vonnegut’s present America, however. It uncovers that Vonnegut’s *oeuvre* is not only a literary project, but a decades-spanning social experiment – an anthropological study which eventually results in a highly defined theoretical system of human analysis. Vonnegut himself explained his tendency to carry out such experiments in his writing:

It’s the nature of my education. I was educated as a chemist and then as an engineer, and my elder brother, my only living sibling, is a reasonably

famous scientist, Dr. Bernard Vonnegut. The experimental method has always been very much in my mind. I got into this frame of mind during high school, setting up experiments to see what happened and regarding this as a very pretty way of making God reveal himself. Regarding *Rosewater*, I said to myself, ‘Well, all right, what happens when you give poor people money?’ So I ran the experiment off and tried to control it as responsibly as I could. (*Conversations* 55)

Vonnegut sets up three such experiments in four of his early novels, and the results yield the three major tenets that act as the foundation of the author’s anthropological theory. The three tents dictate future exchanges in Vonnegut’s work, and the main conflict of his novels often rely on the nature of the third tenet causing a disruption of the status quo established in the first tenet. I will establish these three tenets as follows:

1. Humanity is both a producer and a product of systems of normalization which aim for progress and efficiency to the point of mechanization and self-regulation. This rigid set of standards creates the circumstances for humanity’s lack of freewill.
2. Humanity is actively involved in an endless and fruitless search for purpose.
3. Humanity utilizes communal self-deception as a means to cope with a dehumanizing and purposeless existence and to cling to their humanity.

The circumstances manifested by the nature of the third tenet often runs counter to those established in the first tenet, which causes the climactic tension of many of Vonnegut’s novels. In an attempt to cling to their humanity and assuage their doubts about a

purposeless existence, Vonnegut's protagonists frequently resort to acts of benign kindness or human companionship, acts that fall outside acceptable standards. A system which aims for mechanized efficiency and progress then attempts to realign these humane acts, and the resulting struggle confirms to the protagonist his or her true nature. To establish these three pillars of Vonnegut's social theory I will analyze three of his first four novels, with each novel representing a chapter: *Player Piano*, *The Sirens of Titan*, and *Cat's Cradle*. *Mother Night*, the novel that falls between *The Sirens of Titan* and *Cat's Cradle*, will not be discussed in great detail, as it acts primarily as an introduction to the tenet established more completely in *Cat's Cradle*. *Mother Night*, therefore, acts more as a sub-tenet, a presentation of the folly of contrived identity that prepares the reader for the work of broader scope that follows.

In Chapter I, "'Only One Plane': Normalization and the Mechanization of Humanity in *Player Piano*," I will establish the foundation of Vonnegut's social theory by highlighting the systems of power and normalization on prominent display in his first novel. These systems are the machine which humanity is in a constant state of adjustment within, and Vonnegut's early depictions of such systems establishes a highly normalized society traceable throughout the author's fictional universe. I will use Michel Foucault's work with such systems of discipline to inform my analysis of Vonnegut's own theory of normalization and mechanization.

In Chapter II, "'Greetings': Messages from the Past and Future and the Lifelong March to Meaninglessness in *The Sirens of Titan*," I will focus on the myth-like allusion to Vonnegut's first novel present in his second novel to establish the connective tissue that holds the fictional universe together. Furthermore, I will illustrate how Vonnegut

uses his pre-established tenet and myth to add to his social theory. The Foucauldian systems of normalization, while still present, are no longer the central concern, acting simply as an absolute aspect of human existence. Atop this embedded understanding, I analyze the Tralfamadorian robot and intergalactic traveler Salo as the central figure of his second myth and tenet which establishes humankind's endless, fruitless search for meaning and purpose.

In Chapter III, ““See the Cat? See the Cradle?”: Communal Self-Deception and the Myth of Identity in *Cat's Cradle*,” I examine Vonnegut's depiction of the ways that society participates in communal deception. Elaborating upon the absolution of humanity's confinement, uselessness, and quest for meaning established in the first two tenets, I will establish the remedy Vonnegut detects humankind utilizing as they cope with their unappealing and restrictive existence. Through this process, Vonnegut conveys that each individual, including himself, creates their own mythic identity through a series of comforting lies and contrived connections.

Time and again, Vonnegut concludes that humans aren't becoming machines, but have long been machines. There is not a journey toward mechanization, but toward realization. They remain human enough to attempt to deviate from their machine-like existence, but this proves to be a fruitless endeavor. Exposed to such an existence, Vonnegut depicts a humanity which deceives itself in order to find happiness and contentedness in *granfalloonery*, *foma*, and perceived humanity. Combined, his fourteen novels act as a single but multifaceted, decades-long anthropological experiment. In this thesis, I will uncover how the early stages of this experiment began to develop a Vonnegutian social theory which will establish a critical lens through which to analyze

all of Vonnegut's fiction certainly, but this will be a collateral result. Primarily, this project should form a foundation to develop this brand of Vonnegutian social theory, which can then be used to examine interaction between character and society in all fiction, and in analyzing the actions of a modern American society.

II. “ONLY ONE PLANE”: NORMALIZATION AND THE MECHANIZATION OF HUMANITY IN *PLAYER PIANO*

Of all the recurring themes Vonnegut presented in his career, none are more prominent than that of humanity's freewill or, perhaps, its lack thereof. *Player Piano*, Vonnegut's initial foray into the long form of fiction, is also the foundation for his theories of humanity's autonomy. It is in this dystopian work that he first presented an American society that was both a product and producer of its confinement and normalization, a society beholden to what Todd Davis explains as a “myth common to America and often reified in the genre of utopian science fiction: Mechanical progress means a better future for all” (42). To illustrate this point, Davis notes the two most common utopian forerunners grouped with the novel: “Comparisons to Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World* were plentiful, and such comparisons, of course, continually found Vonnegut's imitation wanting” (41). This is a comparison Vonnegut himself made before the novel was even written, when he sent a letter to Littauer and Wilkinson Publishers asking for an advance to write “this science fiction novel,” he explained, “The novel would be of the ‘Brave New World’, ‘1984’ genre” (*Player Piano* Vonnegut mss.). Davis does go on to defend *Player Piano* in comparison to these other two utopian works, mainly for what would prove to be the early inklings of Vonnegut's groundbreaking style and narrative techniques, but any contemporary accusation of *Player Piano*, “wanting in Orwellian depth” (Lee 11), is a product of a failure to understand the scope of Vonnegut's experiment. In historical context, such a review or criticism of *Player Piano*

upon its release is defensible, but placed in the context of decades-long literary project or anthropological experiment, it is Orwell who is found wanting in Vonnegutian depth. Each subsequent novel which used *Player Piano*'s established universe as a foundation adds to the legacy of Vonnegut's submission to the dystopian genre. When Vonnegut depicts systems of normalization and discipline which create a network of manipulation and regulation that fabricates the individuals of his universe in *Player Piano*, therefore, it is but the launching point of a study with many additions to follow.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), Michel Foucault analyzes modern power relations and several systems of normalization, including ones resembling many of those present in Vonnegut's work. As Foucault explains, all of these systems adhere to a very similar structure: "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (228). Indeed, factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, and prisons are all featured heavily within the text of Vonnegut's fourteen novels. Foucault's work helps illuminate how the social constructs of power in *Player Piano* hyper-individualize in order to normalize, and eventually create (and are in turn created by) a product that self-normalizes with machine-like efficiency. At the heart of this process of normalization is the individual's struggle to find meaning as a cog in the larger machine of society. Vonnegut does not pit the individual against the collective as it may seem; the individual, by his or her very nature, is a part of that collective, and cannot go against that nature. Instead, Vonnegut concludes decisively that the individual is simultaneously attempting to hold on to his or her individuality, while adhering to and exercising exchanges that make up the very social constructs from which they wish to be freed.

As mentioned, later novels of Vonnegut's often trace their roots back to seeds of ideas in the novels that came before. *Player Piano*, being his first novel, acts as a foundation both critically and narratively to build upon. A critical analysis of this novel can work as a base of knowledge from which many of his other novels can be interpreted. Through such an analysis of *Player Piano*, I will present the foundation which Vonnegut builds his social theory. The central achievement of that foundation can be found in Vonnegut's representation of an automated or mechanized humanity, a characterization of the human race that continues to appear and evolve in subsequent novels. It is through the depiction of this humanity and the web of normalization it is caught in that Vonnegut runs his first experiment, constructs his first myth, and develops the first tenet of his social theory.

Paul Proteus, *Player Piano*'s protagonist, lives in a society that provides a stable and healthy existence for all, with no threat of war, poverty, or hunger. And yet, a large portion of the population is vaguely dissatisfied with their existence. The society of *Player Piano* primarily concerns itself with three things: efficiency, progress, and organization. This was an important note for the author from the beginning; in the synopsis of *Player Piano* Vonnegut sent to publishers, he wrote that Kroner, one of Proteus's bosses, "can comment on life only in terms of efficiency" (*Player Piano*, Vonnegut mss.). To eliminate *human* inefficiencies, machines have replaced humans wherever possible. From assembly lines to barbershops, machines take the responsibilities of humans and carry out the tasks with unrivaled efficiency. Proteus explains that these circumstances of his society were arrived at through two industrial revolutions. The first Industrial Revolution (this one an actual historical event) "devalued

muscle work,” and the second “devalued routine mental work” (14). Furthermore, Proteus acknowledges that a third revolution is presently taking shape – one that consists of “thinking machines,” which “devalue human thinking” (15). EPICAC XIV is a machine designed to make all the logistical decisions for humanity without the interference of “reason-muddying emotions” (116), and is in the vanguard of this third Industrial Revolution. Vonnegut’s depiction of the human creators of EPICAC XIV, however, is the first indication of humanity’s likeness to machines, and their nature of being a product of their society: “Human beings are generally regarded as individuals, and if EPICAC XIV is also considered one, then this line of thought ends in putting an equals sign between human and machine. And from this conclusion, that human beings should be considered similar to EPICAC XIV – that is, unemotional and lifeless” (Bogar 251). EPICAC XIV, despite its perceived individuality, shares similarities with humans because *they* are machine-like, not because EPICAC is human-like, and the humans are thus handled by the system like something resembling a machine and not a flesh and blood creature.

The citizens of this version of America are treated like products that have a set of minimum standards for preservation, and a place on the shelf is meticulously calculated for each one. In the name of organization and efficiency (in order to remain progressive), each person becomes hyper-individualized. Qualifier after qualifier is assigned until each individual can be filed away and maintained in the most efficient way possible. This is not a practice that Vonnegut created; it is precisely what militaries do with, not only their soldiers, but with their munitions, tanks, planes, ships, etc. Vonnegut simply magnifies the similarities that Foucault outlines in *Discipline and Punish* between barracks and

other social constructs. Take these descriptions of two characters from *Player Piano*, the first of a soldier: “Private First Class Hacketts was in the middle of the first Squad of the Second Platoon of B Company of the First Battalion of the 427th Regiment of the 107th Infantry Division of the Ninth Corps of the Twelfth Army, and he stayed right there, and put his left foot down every time the drummer hit the bass drum” (64). Private First Class Hacketts is an individual of a group within a group eight times over. While this process certainly turns Hacketts’s existence into little more than a few square feet of space that moves in concert with thousands of other chunks of space, that very specific place is *his*, and no one else’s. Hacketts’s placement and identity has been hyper-individualized in order to normalize his movement. As a member of a military that needs cohesiveness and discipline to maintain control, this process is perfectly logical, but what about for an ordinary citizen? Here is Vonnegut’s description of such an individual: “Edgar R. B. Hagstrohm, thirty-seven, R&R – 131313, Undercoater First Class. 22nd Surface Preserving Battalion, 58th Maintenance Regiment, 110th Building and Grounds Division, Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps” (160). Despite Hagstrohm’s occupation presenting him with the opportunity to do nothing more glorious or heroic than fill a pothole, his title mirrors that of a soldier, right down to the names of the classifying subgroups.

Vonnegut’s conclusion is apparent; it is exactly as logical to organize a large number of manual laborers within strict structures of space and identification as it is with soldiers, guns, bullets, vehicles, and bombs. This hyper-identification of any given population serves two purposes: maintaining the needed standards for each individual and increasing the understanding of those needs. It is a process that allows for improvement

by its very nature, as the organization presents opportunities for the gathering of information. Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish* how similar organizational discipline creates an “analytical space” that produces such information acquiring opportunities:

Its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using. (143)

Knowing, mastering, and using are the three steps Foucault lays out. The organization of bodies within space presents the opportunity to obtain vast amounts of knowledge about each individual – this is the “knowing” portion of Foucault’s description. In *Player Piano*’s fictional society, Hagstrohm’s age, height, weight, years of marriage, I.Q., number of children, number of bedrooms in his house, education, occupation, leisure time activities, and military service are a matter of public record (161); most of which are matters of public record in the reality of American society, as it were. The machines that make the decisions know all of these things, not just about Hagstrohm, but about his wife, kids, neighbors, co-workers, and every other citizen of *Player Piano*’s America. Combining all of this knowledge results in averages, or standards for the “normal” American. This is precisely why Hagstrohm is special – because, as far as the computers can tell, he is “statistically average in every respect save for the number of his initials” (161). The ability of the socially constructed system of organization to create a norm is

the “mastery” aspect of Foucault’s description. This poses the question, how is this mastery *used* to complete Foucault’s process?

The answer to this question is not simple. The final step of the process is the most complicated, and it cycles back into the first step. Once a norm is created by the acquired information, the needs of an average individual can be identified. How much food does the average American need? How much energy is required to give power to his or her house? How many cars, dishwashers, refrigerators, shirts, shoes, socks, pants, hats, plates, cups, forks, knives, beds, lamps, do the systems of production need to create to fulfill the basic requirements of the average individual multiplied by the total number of the population? This is only the beginning, however.

The baseline of a norm creates rules for existence. These rules do not mold the individual because they are part of the individual. One does not exist without the other: “it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, or altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it” (Foucault 216). The systems of discipline and normalization work in concert with the members of the society, functioning as one network that simultaneously influence each other. The knowledge gained by the system fabricates the individual by establishing a norm and judging him or her by that standard, and that fabricated individual then becomes the new subject from which new knowledge is gained, and the three steps of knowing, mastering, and using are continuously in practice. It is a cyclical process, where the system and the individual are indistinguishable and co-dependent. Having established the system of discipline and normalization that humanity is beholden to, Vonnegut turns his attention to the product that such social constructs create.

Society's quest for efficiency in *Player Piano* results in a product that is progressively machine-like. The first step was already addressed by replacing any human function with machine function wherever possible, but it begins to evolve past that. The idea of a mechanized human, expanded upon in subsequent novels (*The Sirens of Titan* and *Breakfast of Champions* most prominently, but certainly not exclusively) originates in this efficiency and progress-driven society of *Player Piano*. At one point, a character threateningly jokes that he will design a machine that can fulfill the responsibilities of a housewife without the lapses inherent with a flesh-and-blood one, going so far as describing the components: "Stainless steel [...], covered with sponge rubber, and heated electrically to 98.6 degrees" (40). Here is a seed of a mechanized automaton that will eventually manifest in *The Sirens of Titan*. It is not the physical makeup of a human that Vonnegut is fascinated by, however, as machines can be made of various materials.

What begins to develop in *Player Piano* that is so central to Vonnegut's work is the mechanized or automated nature of humanity's *actions*. More often than not in Vonnegut's work, a human does what they society expects them to do, as if they were programed to react in precisely a certain way. No matter the situation, Proteus responds to his wife's declaration of love with "I love *you*, Anita," even when their love is clearly at an end. This relationship reflects back to the previous threat of building a wife-machine. Anita and Paul already operate like machines designed to run a household together, no matter what components they are made of. In the synopsis sent to publishers, in fact, Vonnegut called Anita a "system wife," emphasizing her fabricated nature. Similarly, when Proteus drives by a road crew, he is told without fail that his car has a busted headlight, sometimes multiple times by various individuals of the same crew,

because that is the expectation when a stranger sees someone has a busted headlight. Even when an individual deviates from the norm, as Proteus and many other characters of Vonnegut's do, it is seemingly because they are programmed that way, and without fail they eventually resign themselves to their fate and come back to the center. As *Player Piano* acts as a model for the critical core of many future Vonnegut novels, so too does Proteus, in his relationship to the social constructs of discipline and normalization, act as one for many of the protagonists from those novels.

Proteus, Malachi Constant (*The Sirens of Titan*), Eliot Rosewater (*God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*), and Billy Pilgrim (*Slaughterhouse-Five*), among others, follow similar paths. They establish that they deviate from the norm, realize the inescapability of their situation, and eventually realign with nothing more than some harmless self-deception. As Proteus begins to feel the urge "to assuage the nameless, aching need" (48), the failures of the seemingly successful system begin to be revealed. Despite the efficiency and logic of the system of normalization, some needs of the individual cannot be properly identified and fulfilled, and thus the protagonist rebels, quite literally in Proteus's case.

Standards for a norm inherently identify deviations in either direction. If the average I.Q. is eighty-three (as Hagstrohm's is), then someone with an I.Q. of one-thirty-eight, like Proteus, is clearly intellectually superior, assuming that "intelligence quotient" is taken to be a valid measure of such things; an assumption the system of *Player Piano* wholly endorses. Herein lies the beginnings of *Player Piano*'s class system. Test scores determine each individual's potential as a manager or an engineer, titles which have developed into the vocations of the upper-class. If the scores were below acceptable standards, the individual is reassigned to the army, like Hacketts, or the Reconstruction

and Reclamation Corp, like Hagstrohm. If test scores are adequate, the individual goes to college and becomes a member of the industrial aristocracy of managers and engineers.

Proteus is a member of this “ruling” class. He is part of the managerial class that runs Ilium Works, which is a section of the society’s means of production, and he is on the fast track to managerial superstardom. However, Proteus begins to doubt the system and his place in it. Proteus’s path has long been carved by the expectations of society, even by Proteus’s own father, as Davis notes that the protagonist begins to, “question and finally struggle against the metanarrative his father helped to establish” (42). Proteus finds himself a member of the ever-growing section of the population who are vaguely unhappy about their existence, but he also acknowledges the irrefutable necessity and efficiency of the system: “He knew with all his heart that the human situation was a frightful botch, but it was such a logical, intelligently arrived-at botch that he couldn’t see how history could possibly have led anywhere else” (115). Proteus, despite his acknowledgments of the theoretical merits of the system, realizes its flaws.

Yes, the system determines a very specific identity for each individual, but it does so within a strict set of standards. Intelligence only matters if it is in the fields of management, the natural sciences, mathematics, and especially engineering. A character named Professor von Neuman has a doctoral degree in anthropology (the same field Vonnegut himself studied at the University of Chicago), but that degree gets him exactly nothing in the new world order besides a place in the Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps. Furthermore, first-world amenities like refrigerators and washing-machines do not help a human deal with loneliness or a sense of uselessness. There are two divergent forces vying for supremacy in nearly every society Vonnegut depicts, and the one

represented in *Player Piano* is no different. The first is the logistical needs of the masses – the space, order, production, and discipline needed to sustain a functioning society. The second is the human needs of the individuals – love, companionship and purpose. These are the very things that EPICAC XIV can't quantify, and thus cannot provide. The inability of these two forces to reconcile leads to an attempt by the individual to escape from the systems that dehumanize them, but as both Vonnegut and Foucault illustrate, humankind cannot exist outside of these social constructs.

Player Piano ends with a nationwide failed revolution, carried out by the individuals who feel disenfranchised by the rise of the machines. The plan is quite barbaric, to simply seize and smash the machines. The only measure of success is found in Ilium. The revolutionaries are under the impression that they are liberating themselves and reinstating the purpose in their lives. The machines are just physical manifestations of their oppression, however, an outlet for their dissatisfaction, and destroying them can have little influence on the circumstances of their existence. Foucault explains this phenomenon while expanding on the nature of such systems of discipline in *Discipline and Punish*:

The overthrow of these 'micro-powers' does not, then, obey the law of all or nothing; it is not acquired once and for all by a new control of the apparatuses nor by a new functioning or a destruction of the institutions; on the other hand, none of its localized episodes may be inscribed in history except by the effects that it induces on the entire network in which it is caught up. (27)

Their oppression is not a product of a power that can be wielded or conquered, and no lasting harm can be done to it because the system is insubstantial. The revolutionaries are the very creators and purveyors of the system of control and power, and were in turn created by it. Foucault elaborates on the inconsequential nature of revolution against these systems of power by framing it, as he does the majority of *Discipline and Punish*, in the circumstance of a prison. Prison revolts are, “at the level of the body, against the very body of the prison.” As he goes on to explain, “What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or too aseptic, too primitive or too efficient, but its very materiality as an instrument and vector of power” (30).

Similarly, Proteus’s revolution was against the *body* of his society’s system of normalization, but it had no bearing on the existence of the system. The system is only quantifiable in the products it fabricates, but destroying those products does not destroy the system itself. Vonnegut understood this, as well. Revolution is a fruitless venture in his work because humankind lacks freewill due to their relationship with systems of power and normalization. Any attempt to disrupt the flow of progress and efficiency inherent in human nature is nothing more than a momentary deviation by individuals, who will eventually realign with the needs of the masses. This is illustrated in *Player Piano* by the conclusion of the brief revolution.

Ilium is blockaded to prevent the outside world from immediately getting in and undoing the damage the revolutionaries did to the machines. As Proteus and the three other masterminds behind the revolution walk around the wreckage of Ilium, however, they see a group of people fascinated by some scraps. As they move in closer, they discover a few handymen repairing a machine that those very men had destroyed not so

long ago, and the crowd around the repairmen is uproariously pleased when the machine is put back in working order. Even before its destruction, it was a machine that few had a need for, as its only function was producing a powder-based orange drink that no one cared for. And yet, the people who had just smashed this very machine not only got it back in working order, but they stood in line by the dozens in order to taste the production of their handy work.

Vonnegut establishes that outside forces don't need to get in to Ilium to reestablish order. The human nature of the revolutionaries was beholden to that same sense of progress and need for efficiency that established the body of the systems of power in the first place. Proteus realizes that the perception of freewill is nothing but a lie humanity tells itself, a type of comforting deception that would later be coined as *foma* in *Cat's Cradle*, a harmless untruth individuals tell themselves so they feel better about their existence and place in the machinery of life. The truth behind this deception is that each individual is "so well-integrated into the machinery of society and history as to be able to move in only one plane, and along one line" (*Player Piano* 35-36).

With the conclusion of his first novel, Vonnegut's first anthropological experiment is complete, and as Davis explains, Vonnegut's theory becomes part of the real system of normalization reflected in *Player Piano*, as does any subsequent analysis of that work:

If we are to accept the proposition that literature reflects human experience while at the same time it affects human experience, that literature is both a product of the social order and helps establish and maintain social order, it becomes clear that, in its desire to examine the

moral and ethical nature of a work of art, ethical criticism establishes an important bond between the life of the text and the life of the reader.

(Davis 35)

Vonnegut's initial anthropological experiment becomes part of the very system he depicts in the experiment, as do the critical conversation it drives. Adding to the importance of Vonnegut's work, however, is the evolving nature of his social theory. In the decades of Vonnegut's career as a novelist, his theory had a hand in fabricating a system that then in turn affects the future trajectory of the theory. The author has established the myth of Proteus, a parabolic tale within Vonnegut's universe that conveys humanity's lack of freewill, and establishes the first of the three major tenets of this Vonnegutian social theory. Henceforth, Vonnegut will utilize this established tenet of humanity's lack of freewill and mechanization like a myth to allude to humanity's social circumstance and build new tenets through additional anthropological experiments. The next development? An outward search for purpose. What would this search uncover? "Empty heroics, low comedy, and pointless death" (*The Sirens of Titan* 7).

III. “GREETINGS”: MESSAGES FROM THE PAST AND FUTURE, AND THE LIFELONG MARCH TO MEANINGLESSNESS IN *THE SIRENS OF TITAN*

After a seven year hiatus during which he published dozens of short stories for popular magazines, Vonnegut continued his career as a novelist with *The Sirens of Titan* in 1959. Again, he represented many of the social institutions of normalization in his second novel (most notably the military), but the presence of these systems are here ingrained in the nature of humanity. *Player Piano* had established systems of normalization that create and are created by a progressively mechanized humanity, and any future humanity represented in Vonnegut’s novels are similarly entwined in the established web of normalization. Katherine Hume explains this embedded meaning of myth by stating, “A story may uphold a code of behavior without preaching it, and the coherence and strength of that code will come across as a form of meaning [...] These are not part of the stories mythos but rather its ethos, and insofar as the virtues operate powerfully within the tale, readers will tend to absorb them as a form of meaning” (202). The systems of normalization and discipline present in *The Sirens of Titan* are only “repetition” in the way that any aspect of human nature is inherently repeated in a depiction of humanity. The product does not exist without the producer, and thus does not appear without the producer. In time, the myth of *Player Piano*, which establishes humankind’s lack of freewill, proves to be a foundation on which the next tenet can be

built. The tenet which Vonnegut establishes upon this foundation in *The Sirens of Titan* is an omnipresent and fruitless search for purpose by humankind.

Vonnegut, never the one to withhold plot points to build suspense, introduces this addition to his social theory on the very first page of *The Sirens of Titan*: “What mankind hoped to learn in its outward push was who was actually in charge of all creation, and what creation was all about.” The search for these answers yields only the discovery of “a nightmare of meaninglessness without end” (7). The stage is set, then, to unveil a myth of what will prove to be a manufactured member of a strictly normalized society and his fruitless search for purpose. The plot focuses primarily on the story of Malachi Constant, who comes to find that every event in his life is not only structured long before it happens, but that the sole purpose of that grand framework, which covers nearly the span of human history as well as his own lifetime, is to get a small machine-part to Salo, a Tralfamadorian pilot stranded on Saturn’s moon Titan, so the alien can repair his spaceship. Vonnegut uses Salo and his people to connect his second novel with the universe of his first and to deliver the message of humanity’s ultimate purposelessness.

Vonnegut explains that Salo and his people are presently a mechanical race, one which had been developed by a more human-like one. Salo calls the story of his race’s current circumstance a “legend” and begins it as follows:

Once upon a time on Tralfamadore there were creatures who weren’t anything like machines. They weren’t dependable. They weren’t *efficient*. They weren’t predictable. They weren’t durable. And these poor creatures were obsessed by the idea that everything that existed had to have a purpose, and that some purposes were higher than others. (44)

Having just read a detailed analysis of *Player Piano*, one might think Vonnegut was explaining the plight of an earth-based humanity as the author told it, and not the forerunners of life on a fictional alien planet, save for one important difference. The humans of *Player Piano* were already quite machine-like. The Tralfamadorian model of an organic lifeform increasingly building machines to complete functions that they themselves previously served, as Salo's legend has it, doesn't just resemble *Player Piano*'s society, but mirrors it precisely. The difference, however, is that a distinctively different mechanical being isn't presented to replace the humanity of *Player Piano*, as Salo says was the case on his home planet. *Player Piano* doesn't depict machines *replacing* humans, only their functions. What it does depict, and what continues to appear throughout different stories in Vonnegut's universe, is that humans are *evolving* into machines, or that they are perhaps well into this evolution.

Just before having Salo relate this "legend" of Tralfamadore, Vonnegut writes that "No one knew for certain how the first machine [Salo's race on Tralfamadore] had come into being" (192). The joke Vonnegut is telling is that he, as the creator of all these fictional places and situations, knows for certain how the first machine came into being, but the similarity between Salo's legend and *Player Piano* seems to indicate that any reader of his previous novel would be equipped with a greater understanding of Salo's creation, as well. This connection is so undeniable, I would contend that this is one of the very earliest examples of Vonnegut commenting on both the practice of narrative fiction, and the author's connection to the work he or she produces.

Even casual Vonnegut fans are aware of the author's commentary and practice with metafiction in such novels as *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions*.

This is much less heavy-handed than the commentary Vonnegut would deliver in those later novels, but it is no less jarring to the informed reader. Salo's legend would work, with only a few minor edits, as a synopsis of Vonnegut's previous book, and thus any who had read the book just viewed the story which "no one knew for certain." The humanity of *The Sirens of Titan* is not the humanity of *Player Piano* because Vonnegut is not delivering a standard connected or fully enclosed universe like Tolkien, who struggled to integrate his various legends into a single imaginary world, but that does not mean that the universes of Vonnegut's novels aren't connected. Vonnegut doesn't follow the same rules of narrative technique and temporal reality, and thus a lack of a chronological history in which Paul Proteus's revolution takes place before or after Winston Niles Rumfoord's, or any point in *The Sirens of Titan*, does not preclude there being connective tissue uniting the two stories. *Player Piano* acts as a myth (or *legend* as Salo calls the tale of his origins) which informs the circumstances of *The Sirens of Titan* and dictates the exchanges between the players. Vonnegut indicates at a very early stage of his career as a novelist, therefore, that the universe which his novels take place in are connected by a definitive set of rules, even if the stories don't connect in a direct, linear fashion.

If Salo's legend is accepted as an allusion to the myth Vonnegut constructed in the previous installment of his anthropological experiment, then one of two conclusions can be made; the humanity of *Player Piano* eventually arrived at a point unseen in the narrative when they do in fact build a *homo machinus*, a humanoid machine, which replaces the species; or Salo's legend has a detail wrong, and his people are actually a

mechanized evolution, a descendent of the organic creature, instead of the replacement. Salo's very nature proves the latter to be true.

To understand Salo's nature, however, his relationship with humanity must be understood. If Salo is Vonnegut's representation of where the humanity in *Player Piano* is going, then *The Sirens of Titan*'s humanity is representative of the new machine-class: "He wired us like robots, trained us, aimed us – burned us out in a good cause" (170). The "he" in this statement is Winston Niles Rumfoord, but Rumfoord was in turn controlled by the Tralfamadorians. Reflecting back on both Salo's legend and the circumstances of *Player Piano*, organic creatures were creating mechanical beings to improve efficiency and to free the organic beings to pursue a higher purpose. In *The Sirens of Titan*, the Tralfamadorians, who are machine-like at this point in Vonnegutian protean conceptions of them across several novels, are using the humans as tools. The narrative evolution goes like this: Salo explains how organic beings once built machines to serve the purposes that the organic beings once served. Those machines, the new Tralfamadorians, then manipulated humanity to serve their needs. (For instance, they imperceptibly influenced the creation of Stonehenge and the Great Wall of China to send messages to Salo, stranded on the moon Titan [190]). More locally to the narrative of *The Sirens of Titan*, Rumfoord manipulated the entire population of earth, but then discovered his entire manipulative plan was a manipulative plan by the Tralfamadorians just to get a small part to Salo so he could repair his spaceship. These layers of manipulation are piled on each other to primarily accomplish the blurring of the line between human and machine. This works in both directions, however; the Tralfamadorians serve as a

projection of humanity's future, but humanity likewise works as a reflection of Tralfamadore's now mythic past.

Salo's legend declares that the human-like species created machines to serve a higher and higher purpose, but now Salo's race is using a machine-like human race to carry out lower-level purposes so the machines can serve a higher one. Salo is responsible for such a purpose, as he delivers a sealed message to the farthest reaches of the universe, to share with any lifeform he can find there. Salo isn't aware of the message, but similar to Rumfoord and Constant, "Salo did not question the good sense of his errand," because of his machine-like nature: "As a machine, he had to do what he was supposed to do" (189). Already, Salo is quite similar to the humans he shares the story with – Malachi kills his best friend on Mars without hesitation because he is programmed to do so, after all (73-74) – but at this point, the similarities exist because humankind is machine-like, not because Salo is human-like. Vonnegut subsequently changes that, while simultaneously tying the Tralfamadorians to the mechanized evolutionary theory of *Player Piano* instead of the replacement theory of Salo's legend.

The first way Vonnegut does this is by revealing more details regarding Salo's development. Salo states, "The Tralfamadorians manufactured each other" (192) and that "I [Salo] was the best machine my people could make" (208). He then explains the entity which decided what message to send across the universe, as follows:

A kind of university – only nobody goes to it. There aren't any buildings, isn't any faculty. Everybody's in it and nobody's in it. It's like a cloud that everybody has given a little puff of mist to, and then the cloud does all the heavy thinking for everybody. I don't mean there's *really a cloud*. I just

mean it's something like that. If you don't understand what I'm talking about, Skip, there's no sense in trying to explain it to you. All I can say is, there aren't any meetings. (189)

This is another narrative description delivered by a Tralfamadorians *about* the Tralfamadorians, and yet it again has extensive roots in the humanity that Vonnegut depicts. It equates to the network of normalization that each individual is a product and purveyor of, outlined in the analysis of *Player Piano*. This “cloud,” as Salo calls it, is an entity that dictates action and exchanges in a society. Additionally, it is created on a micro-exchange level where each individual gives “a little puff of mist” to construct the whole. This network or cloud then hangs over the subjects of the society and influences their behavior as if they were programmed to act in accordance with the developed norm. Figuratively speaking, this Tralfamadorian process calls to mind the phenomenon outlined by Foucault in his “Panopticism” chapter in *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault explains that Panopticism had the ability to transform a society “into a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space in time” (208). It creates a disciplinary society controlled by surveillance, or more precisely, *perceived* surveillance, and the subjects believe that “The gaze is alert everywhere” (194). The oppressive nature of an expectation being constantly imposed by a perceived gaze (and thus, imposed by each individual on him or herself) begins to manipulate and fabricate society on a capillary level: “The disciplines function increasingly as techniques for making useful individuals” (211). This Panoptic phenomenon, therefore, creates a self-regulating society that progressively fabricates the most efficient iteration of its ever-evolving standard.

Vonnegut depicts such self-regulating alignment throughout all of his novels, as it is so intertwined with the first tenet of his social theory, as outlined in Chapter I. Notably, he writes in *The Sirens of Titan*, “The Earthlings behaved at all times as though there were a big eye in the sky” (193), and he depicts the army of Mars (which is comprised of Earthlings) as making decisions based on a version of groupthink very similar to Salo’s cloud (86-87). Elsewhere, *Player Piano*’s EPICAC XIV is essentially a mechanical manifestation of the decision making cloud. This description of the “cloud” subtly calls into question, through the previously established myth of humankind’s fabrication in *Player Piano*, the nature of Salo’s mechanization. Is Salo truly programmed to serve his purpose like a human programs his or her dish-washer, or is he programmed in the way that Paul Proteus is programmed; compelled by the standards of his society to behave in a certain way? Is Salo, as Vonnegut reveals Proteus to be, “so well-integrated into the machinery of society and history as to be able to move in only one plane, and along one line” (*Player Piano* 35-36)? Through Salo’s human-like miscues, Vonnegut reveals that the Tralfamadorian’s programming is indeed more akin to the latter.

The first inkling of Salo’s humanity is his urge to be Winston Niles Rumfoord’s friend. Salo, like so many previous and future Vonnegut characters, is clinging desperately to the last few humane, compassionate aspects of a mechanical and clinical existence. This urge might be nothing but an ancestral memory for Salo, but it is so intense that, when Rumfoord rejects that friendship, Salo literally falls to pieces after defying his programming to prove his robotic humanity (210). This is only the beginning of Salo proving himself to be human-like, however. Salo explains the central instruction of his message delivery mission as follows:

Of all the orders Salo received before taking off from Tralfamadore, the one that was given the most importance was that *he was not, under any circumstances, to open the message along the way*. This order was so emphasized that it became the very core of the little Tralfamadorian messenger's being. (189)

The very wording of the order demands attention because a true machine, one that has, "to do what he was supposed to do" (186), would not have the capacity, let alone the *urge* to defy his programming. In defiance of this core principal, however, Salo finds that he is decidedly human:

A machine I am, and so are my people [....] I was designed and manufactured, and no expense, no skill, was spared in making me dependable, efficient, predictable, and durable. I was the best machine my people could make. Dependable? [...] I was depended upon to keep my message sealed until I reached my destination, and now I've torn it open. Efficient? [...] Having lost my best friend in the Universe, it now costs me more energy to step over a dead leaf than it once cost me to bound over mount Rumfoord. Predictable? [...] After watching human beings for two hundred thousand Earthling years, I have become as skittish and sentimental as the silliest Earthling schoolgirl. (210)

Despite being manufactured to the greatest ability of his people in an attempt to improve upon the defects of a human-like being, Salo discovers that those same defects are inherent in his very nature, that he is decidedly human-like.

An examination of an early draft of *The Sirens of Titan* provides evidence to the theory that Salo is definitively an evolution of an organic being in his conception. In this early draft, the passages where Salo is directly labeled a machine are absent. The line, “he[Salo] was, like all Tralfamadorians, a machine” (189) from the published text is but one example of the machine-labeling language absent in the early draft. Furthermore, his components, while certainly still mechanical in part, are described to be at least fractionally composed of organic material. These are partial descriptions of the make-up of Salo’s body in the published edition of *The Sirens of Titan*: “Salo’s head was round and hung on gimbals [...] The wafer [envelope containing the message] itself was contained in a gold mesh reticule which was hung on a stainless steel band clamped to the shaft that might be called Salo’s neck” (188-189). These are the versions of those same lines in the earlier draft: “Old Salo’s head was round and hung on bone gimbals [...] The wafer itself was contained in a sort of gold mesh reticule which was hung on a stainless steel band clamped to the bone shaft that might have been called Old Salo’s neck.” A third such occurrence of the word “bone” in the earlier draft occurs on the equivalent of page 205 of the published text. In that line, “A hand seized his [Salo’s] bony throat, threw him down,” the earlier draft had “bone” throat in place of “bony.” “Bony” is a descriptive word, while “bone” is a noun. A metal pipe can feel bony, but it can’t be bone. These three small edits illuminate Salo’s fractionally organic conception, but this is only the beginning of the Tralfamadorian’s ties to a more human-like being. Continuing on the expanded description of Salo in the early draft, Vonnegut initially typed and then crossed out this detail regarding Salo, “Salo’s head thought and saw and heard and spoke, but did not eat or breath [sic] [...] his eating and breathing were done by two openings in his

chest” (*The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut mss.). Vonnegut clearly had an idea of Salo and the Tralfamadorians, which, in their genesis, were not only composed of some organic parts, but beholden to the necessities of organic life like breathing and eating.

This early draft continues this lack of distinction between the Tralfamadorians and humans. When Rumfoord insults Salo by calling him a machine (this is the first utterance of that word in association with Salo in the early draft), the published text follows with “Salo *was* a machine, since he had been designed and manufactured” (199-200). The early draft, however, has that line as, “Technically, Old Salo *was* a machine, since he had been designed and manufactured” (*The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut mss.). The inclusion (and subsequent removal) of the word “technically” is vastly informative, as Vonnegut spent an entire novel with *Player Piano* establishing that humankind *technically* was quite machine-like. If the standards for being a machine, as Vonnegut states, entail being “designed and manufactured” then humans aren’t technically machines, they *are* machines because they are designed and meticulously manufactured in systems of normalization established in *Player Piano*. The distinction between Tralfamadorians and humans is nearly indistinguishable at this point in the early draft, as Vonnegut writes a line that didn’t make the cut into the published novel, “It’s tough being a human being. It’s tough being a machine” (*The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut mss.), that seems to confirm that the two things are quite similar, that Salo is akin to a human, and humans are akin to Tralfamadorians,

In the early draft, the “legend” Salo described of his people’s origin, is moved to the very end of the novel, after Rumford and his dog have already been whipped away from Titan. In this draft, Salo says, “We have a legend about who made the first

machines, but I never really paid any attention to it, until I saw the people of earth” (*The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut mss.). This is evidence that the legend of Salo’s people is essentially a legend of humanity, and, paired with the organic features of the early draft of Salo, it seems not only possible but *likely* that Vonnegut created the Tralfamadorians as a projection of the evolution of humankind. It is not that the humans and the Tralfamadorian machines simply share some similarities, it is that they are mirrored races at drastically different points in their evolutionary journey – the humans informing the Tralfamadorians about their past, and the Tralfamadorians illuminating humanity’s future.

Rumfoord seems to further this theory in the early draft, when he apologizes to Salo for calling him a machine by stating, “You’re a great deal more than a machine” (*The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut mss.). For his part, Salo might have unwittingly given a hint to Rumfoord about the relationship between humans and Tralfamadorians when he, in both the early draft and published copy, translated “Tralfamadore” to mean “*all of us*” (188), a name that might be an arcane hint to the fusion of human and machine. Salo’s statement in the published text, “Didn’t I help you figure out how to control the Martians, so they wouldn’t make trouble?” (198), which of course entailed inserting antenna in human heads to enact something akin to the “telepathic anarchy” (188), called “hypnotic anarchy” in the early draft, of the Tralfamadorians, must now be viewed in a new light. Was this assistance by Salo not an acceleration of humanity’s evolution into a largely mechanical creature? Rumfoord and Salo insert humanity with its first mechanical component, establishing this unique scenario where a hybrid Constant encounters a hybrid Salo, meeting at a crossroads for both species.

While much of this material is edited out or changed in the published draft, more than enough is still present to convincingly contend that Vonnegut intended the Tralfamadorians as a presentation of humankind's evolution. From Salo's human-like sympathies, to Constant's newly acquired mechanical components, there is enough humanity remaining in the Tralfamadorians, and enough machinery present in humanity, to assert that, as Salo is reminded of his ancestral past when he gazes on humanity, humanity is offered a glimpse of their mechanical future as they encounter Salo.

Why is this important for Vonnegut at this point, if he has already established the tenet of humanity's mechanization in his previous novel? The importance of this revelation regarding Salo's people is twofold. First, it illuminates the depth of Vonnegut's use of his own myth, the totality with which the rules he establishes pervade the universe he creates. All of this is waiting to be uncovered by the informed reader, embedded in the character of Salo. Secondly, it sets the stage on which the next myth will be constructed. Salo, proving himself to be human-like, acts as a manifestation of humanity's fast-forwarded evolution. By Salo's very own admission, the mechanical evolution was driven by a search for purpose:

These creatures spent most of their time trying to find out what their purpose was. And every time they found out what seemed to be a purpose of themselves, the purpose seemed so low that the creatures were filled with disgust and shame. And, rather than serve such a low purpose, the creatures would make a machine to serve it. This left the creatures free to serve higher purposes. But whenever they found a higher purpose, the

purpose still wasn't high enough. So machines were made to serve higher purposes, too. (192)

Salo is the best machine his people can make, and he was chosen for his mission by his people through "popular telepathic enthusiasm" (188), so it can be deduced that he is serving the highest purpose imaginable. Salo, a representative of a future iteration of humanity's evolution, finds that he is being used as surely as a Constant, Chrono, and Winston Niles Rumfoord, and like all of those humans, he is sure that the purpose he is serving is of utmost importance – until he discovers exactly what that purpose is. When he opens the message he has dedicated his life to delivering, the message that Constant, Chrono, Rumfoord, and all of humanity and all those on Tralfamadore have dedicated their existence to, Salo discovers a single dot. "The meaning of a dot in Tralfamadorian [...] is – '*Greetings*'" (210).

Alas, through the Titanic myth of a lone Tralfamadorian messenger, Vonnegut establishes the second tenet of his evolving social theory, and he does it on the back of the first tenet. Salo says, "I was the best machine my people could make," and Vonnegut confirms that every member of humanity is the best machine his or her people can make. They, like Salo, are manufactured within the machinery of their society to be useful, and then they spend their lives trying to discover what that use is. Salo is the pinnacle of efficiency, however, and yet the greatest purpose his entire society could find to serve is to say hello to whatever is around to hear it at the other end of the universe. Through this revelation, Vonnegut posits that each individual is not only the best machine his or her people can make, but that the purposes they endlessly seek in order to add meaning to their lives are contrived, and thus fruitless. Within the narrative of this conclusion,

Mustazza declares that Malachi, his wife, and his son “find the wisdom and goodness of love after they have taken up residence on an Edenic Titan, far from the troubled – fallen – world as we know it. In effect, they discover what Milton calls ‘the paradise within’” (47). This is, again, a product of Mustazza being arrested by the myth of Eden and thereby forcing Vonnegut’s square narrative into the round-holed narrative of Genesis. The happiness Malachi and his family find on Titan is the product of detachment. The love Malachi expresses for his wife stands in open defiance of his circumstances; it is one deliverance of the benign rebellion that is so prominent in Vonnegut’s characters. Their habitation of an Edenic setting mocks them instead of comforts them. The Edenic myth is utilized by Vonnegut not as an answer but as a means to reveal a solution, to build his own myth in his “modern mythic universe.”

Humanity in *The Sirens of Titan* is molded by the same compulsion for purpose, progress, and efficiency as Proteus’s is in Vonnegut’s previous novel. They are beholden to the same hyper-individualizing and yet normalizing system which Proteus struggled against. Including Salo’s “legend,” which is reminiscent of the circumstances of *Player Piano*, reveals precisely what Vonnegut is doing throughout his fourteen novels: building a mythology for existence. Simply because Proteus’s precise story is not an historical precursor to Malachi Constant’s is irrelevant, because it is simply allegory for a facet of humanity that is inherent in existence. Humans are already “second rate machines,” as Vonnegut proved in *Player Piano*, and they will always strive for efficiency, progression, and purpose.

If a critic takes Vonnegut’s books one at a time, then he or she sees the rehashing of the freewill theme as repetition and not addition or evolution. After *Player Piano*,

Vonnegut never again simply establishes humanity's immersion in systems of normalization, displaying their lack of freewill; it is done. Each subsequent time it appears, it adds nuance to the plight of humanity. *Player Piano* established humanity's lack of freewill and their slow march to metaphorical mechanization, and when *The Sirens of Titan* touches on that freewill, it is alluding to the myth, the set of rules established in the previous novel, and then it builds on that. The chief addition to the mythology that Vonnegut's second novel establishes is humanity's aimless, fruitless search for purpose in a world where they don't have freewill. With the character of Salo, Vonnegut reflects on the myth established in *Player Piano*, confirms that humans are essentially organic machines, and creates the new myth of an unending and fruitless search for purpose. Subjection to the ironclad rules established in the first two tenets is inescapable, save through death or abandonment of the human race. This inescapability sets the stage for the third and final tenet that I identify as central to Vonnegut's anthropological theory, as Vonnegut switches from the plight of humanity to humanity's reaction in the context of his social theory.

In the opening lines of *The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut explains that humankind, "looked outward" (7), to find meaning in life, and then explains that the story he is about to tell is an account of the time when humanity sought answers in the physical reaches of the universe. Because of their intertwined nature, *Player Piano* can also be viewed as a tale of humankind looking outward, but instead of finding consoling answers, they found disturbing facts of their existence. Vonnegut continues in the opening lines of *The Sirens of Titan* by saying that once they have exhausted their outward search without yielding the results they sought, they turned inward: "Only inwardness remained to be explored.

Only the human soul remained *terra incognita*” (7). Tally takes note of this, observing that the hopefulness in *The Sirens of Titan*’s opening chapter, “allows us briefly to succumb to Paul Proteus’s own fantasy of an idyllic realm to be populated by his own personal dreams and ideals; the ‘nation of two’ is really a ‘utopia of one’s self’” (30). In the scheme of Vonnegut’s decades-long project, *Cat’s Cradle*, Vonnegut’s third anthropological experiment that I will analyze, is the beginning of the inward exploration, and what the author reveals humanity uncovering are *foma* and *granfalloonery*, and a contrived identity.

IV. “SEE THE CAT? SEE THE CRADLE?”: COMMUNAL SELF- DECEPTION AND THE MYTH OF IDENTITY IN *CAT’S CRADLE*

In a cosmic twist of *zah-mah-ki-bo* (the Bokononist term for fate) that seems to be pulled right out of a Vonnegut novel, the University of Chicago’s Department of Anthropology later accepted *Cat’s Cradle* (plus other writings) in lieu of Vonnegut’s thesis after rejecting his first attempt in the 1940s, thus awarding the author an M.A. degree decades after he had withdrawn from the graduate program. That first attempt was proposed in a forty-page submission, within which Vonnegut argued that “the similarities between the Cubist painters in Paris and the leaders of Native American [...] uprisings late in the nineteenth century could not be ignored” (Shields 91). The rejected proposal was titled, “Fluctuations Between Good and Evil in Simple Tales,” which Vonnegut later adapted as “The Shapes of Stories” to be frequently used and diagrammed in his public lectures. The cosmic joke underlying this event in Vonnegut’s personal life is that *Cat’s Cradle* could acceptingly have a subtitle of “The Shapes of Stories II” without a single edit to the novel. A definition of some of the Vonnegut invented Bokononist terms from *Cat’s Cradle* will help reveal why this is the case, presented in Vonnegut’s own words wherever possible in the order they are revealed in novel:

Karass: “Teams that do God’s Will without ever discovering what they are doing” (2).

Sinookas: “Tendrils” of one’s life (6).

Wampeter: “The pivot of a *karass*. No *karass* is without a *wampeter*, Bokonon tells us, just as no wheel is without a hub. Anything can be a *wampeter*: a tree, a rock, an animal, an idea, a book, a melody, the Holy Grail. Whatever it is, the members of its *karass* revolve about it in the majestic chaos of a spiral nebula. The orbits of the members of a *karass* about their common *wampeter* are spiritual orbits, naturally. It is souls and not bodies that revolve” (52).

Vin-dit: “A sudden, very personal, shove in the direction of Bokononism, in the direction of believing that God Almighty knew all about me, after all, that God Almighty had some pretty elaborate plans for me” (69).

Wrang-wrang – “A person who steers people away from a line of speculation by reducing that line, with the example of the wrang-wrang’s own life, to an absurdity” (78).

Duprass: “A *karass* composed of only two persons” (86).

Granfalloon: “A false *karass*, a seeming team that was meaningless in terms of the ways God gets things done” (91).

Zah-mah-ki-bo: “Fate – inevitable destiny” (184).

Foma: Harmless untruths, lies (191).

If a *vin-dit* is a push in the direction of Bokononism, the destination of Bokononism must be understood. A push towards Bokononism begins with a belief that “God Almighty had some pretty elaborate plans for me” and ends with a realization that those plans are as meaningless as Salo’s journey to deliver a hello across the universe. Bokonon delivered his last message to his followers by saying, “God was surely trying to

kill them, possibly because He was through with them, and that they should have the good manners to die” (273). A push in the direction of Bokononism is, therefore, a push in the direction of realization of the truth of one’s existence, at its core. Furthermore, as I will later illustrate, Bokononism is just a contrived tool capable of assigning arbitrary labels to aspects of existence that were present long before they were defined. For the sake of the narrative of *Cat’s Cradle*, this realization is that God, doesn’t care about each person’s existence, at all. It is the realization of meaninglessness that Constant, Rumfoord, and Salo all discovered in *The Sirens of Titan*, where Vonnegut already established the fictional religion of “God the Utterly Indifferent.”

In fact, Vonnegut’s second novel is an excellent example to illustrate that the University of Chicago essentially accepted an adaption of the thesis that they had already rejected. If Constant is the protagonist of *The Sirens of Titan*, then his *vin-dit* is most obviously his meeting with Rumfoord where his future is laid out before him. Constant’s *karass* includes Rumfoord, Beatrice, Chrono, and Salo, and they all revolve around the *wampeter* that is Chrono’s good luck piece, or the piece that Salo needs to fix his spaceship. Boaz, Constant’s fellow Army of Mars veteran and co-captive in the caves of Mercury, acts as a *wrang-wrang*, showing Constant the inescapability of his situation. The shape of many of Vonnegut’s stories can be mapped with these terms, simply because of the terms’ universality.

This revelation is important for three reasons. It is yet another connecting tendril tying together Vonnegut’s universe, but it also illustrates the scope of the application of Vonnegut’s theories through its universality. If *Player Piano* lays the foundation of Vonnegut’s social theory, *Cat’s Cradle* provides its fundamental vocabulary and

principles. Thirdly, *Cat's Cradle* discloses Vonnegut's third tenet by establishing the eventual destination of many of the author's characters after their journey, illuminated by Vonnegut's own Jonah myth. As certainly as the second tenet was established on the back the first, so too is the third established on the backs of the tenets regarding humankind's freewill and search for purpose. *Cat's Cradle's* narrative delivers the story of a man who tells the reader to call him Jonah in the novel's opening line. The novel is constructed within the framework previously laid out, as Jonah's (who reveals that his real name is John) journey into Bokononism, into the belly of the beast that is honest deception.

When Vonnegut writes about the transition from "outwardness" to "inwardness" in the opening pages of *The Sirens of Titan*, the transition he subsequently displays in his anthropological project is one from a search for truth to a longing for naivety and ignorance. *Cat's Cradle* begins to establish this tenet through circumstances of contrived identity and self-deception. Vonnegut introduces Bokononism in *Cat's Cradle*, a fictional religion rife with theological theories and practices, and many of these theories can be retroactively identified in previous Vonnegut novels. In *Player Piano*, for example, the character Lasher delivers an adequate definition of the benefits of what in *Cat's Cradle* will be labeled *granfalloonery* when explaining another character's membership in numerous clubs like the Free Masons: "Harmless magic: good, old-fashioned bunkum [...] Talk about your hierarchies; Luke, with an I.Q. of about 80, has titles that'd make Charlemagne sound like a cook's helper" (*Player Piano* 95). Following this in *The Sirens of Titan* is an open embrace of what in *Cat's Cradle* are designated *foma*, when Boaz tells Constant, "Don't *truth* me [...] and I won't *truth* you" (*The Sirens of Titan* 143).

Vonnegut explains that Boaz meant that he wouldn't reveal painful truths to Constant if Constant didn't reveal painful truths to him. In *Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut essentially depicts an entire society that agrees not to "truth" each other – to openly deceive each other, even. Evident by Lasher's description and Boaz's plea, the consensual society-wide deception was prominently apparent in Vonnegut's fiction before *Cat's Cradle*; Vonnegut simply assigned it a name in 1963. Furthermore, Vonnegut didn't even have to invent examples of *granfalloon*s and *foma* to depict in *Cat's Cradle*, as his contemporary society offered up plenty of real-life examples from which the author could choose: "examples of *granfalloon*s are the Communist party, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Electric Company, and the International Order of Odd Fellows – and any nation, anytime, anywhere" (93). As it was with social normalization and humankind's search for purpose developed in the first two tenets, Vonnegut's representation of a self-deceiving humanity is nothing less than a projection of the reality of American society, acted out by caricatures in the pages of his book.

Jonah, *Cat's Cradle's* protagonist, sets out to write a book about the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, in the process of which he encounters the three children of Felix Hoenikker, who is labeled the "father of the atomic bomb" (6). Throughout the narrative, Felix's children, Angela, Frank, and Newt, prove to be members of Jonah's *karass*, but a reader of Vonnegut's earlier novel would notice that they also share something in common with Constant and others in *The Sirens of Titan*: they are being used. Newt is used by a Russian ballet dancer, who turns out to be a Soviet spy; Angela is being used by a United States weapons developer; and Frank is being used by the President of San Lorenzo. They are all being used because they are the sole

possessors of Felix Hoenikker's final "gift" to humankind, *ice-nine*. They are all satisfied with being used because it gives their life a perceived purpose. Angela becomes a wife to a charming and handsome husband, Newt becomes a lover to a beautiful dancer, and Frank becomes a general as a tradeoff for relinquishing some small fraction of their *ice-nine*. Their circumstances of being used and their pursuits of purpose are secondary, mere allusions to the myth of the meaninglessness pervading every human life, as Vonnegut looks to build on to humankind's purposelessness by examining their reaction to such an existence, and he hints at this next step in the evolution of his social theory in the very title of his fourth novel.

Felix Hoenikker primarily left humanity two destructive "gifts" in *ice-nine* and the atomic bomb, but he left his youngest son, Newt, a third gift, which represents humanity's response to an existence where they "have trouble understanding how truth, all by itself, could be enough for a person" (55), as a secretary notes in the very laboratory where Felix developed *ice-nine* and the atomic bomb. That third gift is a fascination with cat's cradles. A cat's cradle is created when one takes a piece of string and loops it around his or her fingers, causing the lengths of string to intersect in the middle, which forms a series of X's. At various points in the book, Newt Hoenikker explains, "Making that cat's cradle was the closest I ever saw my father come to playing what anybody else would call a game" (11), and, "One of the oldest games there is, cat's cradle. Even the Eskimos know it. [...] For maybe a hundred thousand years or more, grownups have been waving tangles of string in their children's faces" (165). Cat's cradles, as Newt explains it, have been present in human history for millennia, and thus Vonnegut introduces humankind's earliest known *foma*.

Newt laments that “kids grow up crazy” because “A cat’s cradle is nothing but a bunch of X’s between somebody’s hands, and little kids look and look and look at those X’s.... [but] *No damn cat, and no damn cradle*” (166). The cat’s cradle is representative of *foma*, therefore, because comfort and meaning is found in the nothingness that is the intersecting strings. Newt reveals that, on the day the atom bomb dropped, the day Jonah had planned to call, as the title of his never-to-be-completed book, “*The Day the World Ended*” (1), Felix was playing with a loop of string. The “father” of the atom bomb, the man who once said he had no use for made-up games because “there are so many real ones going on” (11), could be found playing what his son called the oldest game there is on the day that Felix’s greatest scientific breakthrough proved its terrible applicability to the real world. A vital detail that Newt mentions is that Felix must have learned the game from his own father, Newt’s grandfather, who was a tailor when Felix was a boy. Not only does Felix, the greatest scientific mind of the generation, confirm the comfort that can be found in the self-deception of the cat’s cradle, perhaps the only comfort available on such a day to such a man, but that comfort is tied to the naivety he possessed in his youth. Encapsulated in Felix’s fascination with the cat’s cradle is Vonnegut’s third tenet: humanity clings to the comfort of self-deception, found in contrived meaning, in the face of an unappealing existence. Establishing the individual’s self-deception is only one aspect of the third tenet, however, as *granfalloonery* takes *foma* and applies them on a communal level.

Perhaps the most prominently depicted *granfalloon* in *Cat’s Cradle* (besides Bokononism itself), are Hoosiers. “Hoosier,” of course, is a nickname for people from Indiana, people like Vonnegut, Eugene V. Debs, Larry Bird, and myself, the author of

this thesis. Vonnegut initially delivered his own definition of a Hoosier in an early draft of *Cat's Cradle*, "A Hoosier is a person from the State of Indiana. The root of the word is unknown" (*Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut mss.), but this seemed to be more in the matter-of-fact defining style of *Breakfast of Champions* (I half expected to see a crude drawing of the Hoosier state, or of Indiana University's basketball team's striped warm-up pants), and was subsequently cut before publication. Vonnegut uses "Hoosiers" as an exemplary model for introducing the term *granfalloon*, and within that introduction is an obvious tie to both the first two tenets. Jonah, a self-declared Hoosier, encounters Hazel Crosby. Hazel is elated to meet another Hoosier, and she happily explains, "Hoosiers do all right. Lowe [her husband] and I've been around the world twice, and everywhere we went we found Hoosiers in charge of everything" (90). Hazel has assigned importance to the arbitrary notion of being a Hoosier. She notes, "We Hoosiers got to stick together," and she encourages any young Hoosiers she meets to call her "Mom," tying *granfalloonery* to the oft-appearing theme of extended families in Vonnegut's work. Furthermore, when Jonah finally calls her Mom as she so desires, Vonnegut writes, "Some piece of clockwork had completed its cycle. My calling Hazel 'Mom' had shut it off, and now Hazel was rewinding it for the next Hoosier to come along" (91). In a two page span, Vonnegut introduces the key to his third tenet and ties it to the first two tenets. Hazel utilizes the Hoosier *granfalloon* to add meaning to her life through other members of the *granfalloon* like "the manager of that new hotel in Istanbul [...] the new Ambassador to Yugoslavia [...] the Hollywood Editor of the *Life* magazine [...] And that man in Chile" (90), reflecting back on humanity's constant search for meaning. (Amusingly, Vonnegut cut "And Benjamin Harrison" from this list of Hoosiers in an early draft of *Cat's Cradle*,

seemingly implying that a hotel manager is more noteworthy to Mrs. Crosby than a former President of the United States.) Nearly simultaneously, she is represented as acting like a machine in the process of making the connection of her *granfalloon*, indicating that *granfalloonery* is engrained in the mechanized nature of humanity represented in *Player Piano*. Socially engineered to act along strict lines while searching for a nonexistent meaning, Vonnegut displays humanity actively engaging in communal self-deception to assuage the uneasiness they feel about existence.

Jonah is Vonnegut's messenger, conveying the intertwined nature of humankind with self-deception and contrived meaning, just as Proteus and Salo were the vehicles for the previous myths. Jonah claims to be writing the text within *Cat's Cradle* as a book about his journey into Bokononism. The questions, then, are who is Jonah, and what is Bokononism? An examination of an early draft of *Cat's Cradle* reveals that Jonah is Vonnegut himself, and Bokononism is nothing, or whatever anyone wants it to be, which amounts to the same thing. Samuel D. Stewart, a Managing Editor at Hold, Rinehart and Winston Publishing returned an early draft of *Cat's Cradle* to Vonnegut on January 3, 1963. This draft is now stored in Indiana University's Lilly Library with the rest of their Vonnegut archived collection. For much of the draft, it is very similar to the final published version, but some minor differences are very revealing.

The published version of the book depicts a scene where Jonah and a cab driver stop at a tombstone carving establishment in Ilium, New York, where they see a large grave marker carved into an angel. The owner of the shop explains that the angel was carved by his great-grandfather, commissioned by a German immigrant who departed for some land he owned in Indiana before paying for the angel, which was supposed to sit

over the immigrant's wife's grave. The shop owner's great-grandfather had already carved the woman's name in the angel, which the current shop owner called "a screwy name" and stated that any descendants of the immigrant would have "Americanized the name," to "Jones or Black or Thompson" (72). Vonnegut, of course, was the descendant of German immigrants who eventually settled in Indiana. As for the narrator, it is revealed later in the text (in his encounter with Hazel Crosby) that he is similarly a Hoosier, and he speaks up in the published text to explain that the name has, perhaps, not been Americanized to Jones or Black or Thompson:

"There you're wrong," I said, when the vision was gone.

"You know some people by that name?"

"Yes."

The name was my last name, too. (73)

This is how Chapter 34 ends in the published text of *Cat's Cradle*, but the earlier draft had a slight adjustment and an additional line: "The last name was mine. 'Vonnegut,' that tombstone said" (*Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut mss.). This is a small but monumental subtraction from the text of *Cat's Cradle*, as it again shows Vonnegut attempting to place himself in his work years before doing so in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, only this time it wasn't an obvious allusion to his previous novel, but a blatant attempt to force the reader to question if the writer and the narrator are connected, or perhaps even the same person. Illustrating just how groundbreaking this attempt was, Klinkowitz explains, "editors talked Vonnegut out of the idea as being too radical" (273) in *Cat's Cradle*. Further indicating how such a narrative interruption by the author was viewed by editors, other minor edits around that section included changing "great stone prick" to "monument"

(which Vonnegut had earlier described as an “alabaster phallus”) on page 61, replacing the word “Shit” with “Crap” on page 69, and removing “And a whore” from Asa Breed’s description of Felix’s wife’s condition on page 68 and “thumbs up our ass” in Crosby’s human relations rant on page 89 (*Cat’s Cradle*, Vonnegut mss). In the light of these other edits, the removal of “‘Vonnegut,’ that tombstone said” appears like a causality of a crusade against vulgarity, only this particular edit was a vulgarity of literary style, not of linguistic manners.

The narrator’s name is known to the reader because the narrator himself instructed the reader to, “Call me Jonah” (1) in the opening lines of the book. That opening line, as well as the first paragraph in which the self-proclaimed Jonah explains his actual name is John, is absent from the earlier draft. The only name ever associated with the narrator in that draft is the “Vonnegut” on the tombstone. Even if his name *is* Jonah, however, that doesn’t remove the connection to Vonnegut as a Hoosier, descended from German immigrants, who still possesses an un-Americanized German name. In the published text, Jonah, states “if I had been a Sam, I would have been a Jonah still” (1). Despite his editors removing the introduction of his own name, therefore, Vonnegut makes it apparent in the opening lines that the “real” name of the character doesn’t matter; the narrator is representative of Vonnegut, or of any individual, and he would be of a Jonah figure regardless of his name. The narrator is a mythic figure. In the early draft of the novel, where “Vonnegut” is definitively the last name of both narrator and author, a completely different ending is present that both strengthens the connection in the mythic universe between *Cat’s Cradle* and previous books, as well as furthering the argument for the universality of Vonnegut’s evolving social theory.

To begin, *ice-nine* never contacts the ocean, and all the water on earth doesn't freeze as a result. This is prevented by a twenty-seven foot rope that was tied to the *ice-nine* contaminated bed, which plunges into the ocean in the published text. In the early draft of *Cat's Cradle*, the rope is tied to the bed because of a Boknonist superstition that a twenty-seven foot rope tied to one's bed will help with sleeplessness. Furthermore, the narrator participates in some extended dialogue with Boknon, who proves himself to be both an eerily accurate prophet (the rope being just the first indication of his apparent omniscience), and yet exactly as fraudulent as he declares himself to be. Instead of the U.S. ambassador to San Lorenzo and his wife falling into the ocean and perishing, as occurs in the published version of *Cat's Cradle*, it is Newt and Hazel Crosby who find themselves on the wrong side of the landslide into the sea. However, "A hero now appeared," in the form of Philip Castle. He leapt across the divide of the splintering rocks onto the doomed platform with Hazel and Newt, but, "It was folly. There was nothing he or anyone short of God Almighty could do." Vonnegut, in his early draft of his finale to *Cat's Cradle*, went on to write:

Castle had a plan. It was exceedingly simple. He was going to pose with Hazel and little Newt. He took Newt by the hand, and he put his arm around Hazel's waist.

He smiled at us.

He spoke to us across the void. "Remember us always" he said amiable [sic] "the random three. Farewell!"

The wedge toppled out, plunged down. It was swallowed whole by the luke-warm sea. (*Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut mss.)

Not only is this a comically morbid confirmation of the absurdity of *granfalloon*s (“the random three” being exactly as meaningless as “Hoosiers,” only honestly so), but it is evidence of the narrator’s realization of Bokonon’s ability to “predict” a contrived future, as the older Castle, Julian, informs the narrator that Bokonon had prophesized that Philip Castle would die between a fool and a midget. This scene caused the narrator (who, again, does not declare himself “Jonah” in this draft), to begin sobbing and declare, “I had blown every fuse in my nervous system” (*Cat’s Cradle*, Vonnegut mss.). This sentiment is another tie between the humans of Vonnegut’s universe and the Tralfamadorians and Salo, who declared, in similar language, “The machine is no longer a machine [...] his circuits shorted, and his gears stripped. His mind buzzes and pops like the mind of an Earthling” (*The Sirens of Titan* 210). It is this breakdown of flesh-and-blood machinery which turns the narrator in the early draft of *Cat’s Cradle* on a course that reveals the very personal nature of the novel to its author.

In the earlier draft, the narrator calls upon Bokonon, intending to force the holy man to become president of San Lorenzo, and Bokonon calls the narrator “Mr. Vonnegut,” further tying the author of *Cat’s Cradle* to the narrator; at this point, the early draft takes on aspects of metafiction almost as straightforward as those within *Breakfast of Champions*, in which Vonnegut himself is one of the protagonists. As Bokonon and the narrator begin to talk, the narrator, this Mr. Vonnegut, states his belief that he is dreaming. When Bokonon ask how he knows, Mr. Vonnegut presents the bed spread Bokonon is wrapped in as evidence. The bed spread has the letters, “AGFR&RD.” Mr. Vonnegut asks Bokonon what the letters stand for, and Bokonon responds, “All God’s Friends Respect and Revere Divinity,” but Mr. Vonnegut counters that they stand for

“Army Ground Forces Rehabilitation and Reassignment Depot,” citing this as a memory from his past when he stayed at this depot as evidence that he is dreaming. Bokonon reveals, however, that the surplus from this depot was sent to San Lorenzo, to help the small island nation “keep the Communists away.” He then explains that Papa Monzano, the now deceased President of San Lorenzo, believed the letters to stand for, “Almighty God Fought Russia, and Russia Died” (*Cat’s Cradle*, Vonnegut mss.). This exchange acts as a confirmation that each individual assigns contrived meaning to his or her surroundings to fit the narrative of his or her life. Furthermore, it asserts that the contrived meaning embedded in *foma* and *granfalloonery* is not a dream-like existence, but the reality individuals construct for themselves, simply made to fit in within the structure at hand.

The conversation between Mr. Vonnegut and Bokonon continues to tie the author to the narrative, to present a conversation seemingly between a version of the author and one of his characters, akin to the one between “Kurt Vonnegut” and Kilgore Trout in the climactic encounter at the end of *Breakfast of Champions*. It is best presented in its entirety, considering it is not readily available for referred viewing:

“Is there a Bokononist word for a *karass* that’s more out in the open than others, a *karass* whose bare bones show, a *karass* whose purpose is to make public demonstration of some idea God Almighty wants people to have?” I said

“A *vow-prass*,” he said.

“There *is* such a concept?” I said.

“There is now,” said Bokonon. “You and I just made it up.”

“Well, let me tell you about the *vow-prass* to which I belong” I said. And I told him the tale I have set down in this book.

He was impressed. “I must confess –” he said, “I think you have a classic *vow-prass* there.”

“Would you care to say what it has been up to?” I said.

“You’re telling the lies now,” he said. “I’m simply sitting back and savoring them.” He was sitting back on Mona’s bed.

“All right,” I said. “The purpose of our *vow-prass* has been to make a public demonstration of this fact: *That warm-hearted lies, warm-hearted magic, warm-heart [sic] superstitions, are as beneficial as any truths – and that truth can injure and kill.*”

This narrating Mr. Vonnegut in the early draft, a Hoosier, a descendent of German immigrants, and a writer, states, “And I told him about the tale I am setting down in this book.” Kurt Vonnegut, a Hoosier, a descendent of German immigrants, and a writer, set the tale down in the book that is *Cat’s Cradle*.

The difference between the Mr. Vonnegut of the early draft and Jonah of the published version is wholly within the presence of two “Vonneguts” and an introductory paragraph in which the narrator tells the reader what to call him, before immediately telling him no matter what his name happened to be, he would still need to be called his self-declared name. The difference between the narrator of *Cat’s Cradle* and its author, then, is no greater than the difference between the narrator of *Breakfast of Champions* and its author. Furthermore, the narrator/author is actively writing his own book which he is the protagonist in. He is “telling the lies” that manifest the meaning of the story, and

declaring the contrived purpose of his own existence. Not only is this early draft undeniable evidence of the presence of Vonnegut in his own work six years before his use of this technique in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, but it is revelatory regarding this third presented tenet of human existence that Vonnegut is establishing in *Cat's Cradle*. Bokononism and all of its terms are nothing more than definitions of the real-life happenings of humanity; of their tendency to find meaning in contrived connections, to tell themselves harmless untruths that make existence less oppressive. Bokononism simply names things that have existed in humankind for so long that a representation of one of the arbitrary definitions can be deemed a "classic" moments after the invention of the name, as was the case with Mr. Vonnegut's *vow-prass*. This revelation, evident in the early draft, explains why Jonah in the published text would have been a "Jonah" no matter his real name – because the titles are arbitrary. In fact, the *individual* doesn't even matter. Jonah, Mr. Vonnegut, Hazel, Newt, Franklin, Philip Castle, Bokonon, Billy Pilgrim, Paul Proteus, Old Salo, Winston Niles Rumfoord, Malachi Constant, Kilgore Trout, Kurt Vonnegut, or Zach Perdieu are all going to construct their own meaning out of the tale they exist in – going to assign their own words to the AGFR&RD acronym, for instance – and would thus be capable of carrying the torch of this Jonah myth. Bokonon wasn't omniscient, he just gave Philip Castle and others a narrative to fit their story in, and they were compelled to run with it.

Returning to the published text, *Cat's Cradle* is Jonah's cat's cradle. His past is represented by the fingers, his present the intersecting lengths of string, and he finds his *foma* and *granfalloonery* in the patterns they make. But it is also Mr. Vonnegut's cat's cradle. Like Bokononism, *Cat's Cradle* is a collection of *foma*. Evident by the undeniable

presence of a version of the author within the text of *Cat's Cradle*, the book itself is representative of the very narrative falsehood humankind constructs for themselves. It is a mythic addition to the postmodern mythic universe Vonnegut created, and through the universal nature of the communal self-deception, it adds a third tenet to the two he established in earlier iterations of his anthropological experiment, while simultaneously illustrating the breadth of application possible with the evolving Vonnegutian social theory.

V. CONCLUSION

Vonnegut establishes a universe in which each character is beholden to the three tenets of normalization, meaninglessness, and self-deception, and the characters' natural response is attempted deviation. Vonnegut's characters, normalized to the point of mechanization, searching for a nonexistent purpose, and deceiving themselves into contentedness, find themselves comprehending the circumstances of their existence, and they make one last attempt to cling to their humanity, to uncover some form of the love and companionship that EPICAC XIV can't quantify.

Like Proteus's revolution, however, these deviations from the standard are benign, and have no lasting effect on the systems that create their circumstances because those circumstances are facets of the nature of humanity. Understanding this, the characters realign, finding some measure of comfort in their benign deviation in attempting to be compassionate and humane and happy. This is represented in Proteus's instruction to "do a good job of being human beings" (*Player Piano* 178); it can be seen in Constant's sentiment to "love whoever is around to be loved" (*The Sirens of Titan* 220); Eliot Rosewater's letter to babies, which states in part, "God Damn it, you've be kind" (*God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* 129); and Billy Pilgrim's representation of a life manipulated to believe that, "Everything is beautiful and nothing hurt" (*Slaughterhouse-Five* 122). These climactic conclusions are yet another facet of humanity. Vonnegut presents the responses of Proteus, Constant, Rosewater, and Pilgrim as perfectly

understandable given the human condition. To cling to one's humanity, to his or her humaneness, is as absolute a facet of human existence as systems of normalization, fruitless searches for meaning, and self-deception. In the creation of this postmodern mythic universe, Vonnegut was never creating new rules for existence; he was simply establishing a narrative arena to depict the very real facets of humanity's existence. In his early novels, he develops the three tenets that are formative to the continuation of this universe, and of the social theory developed on the backs of myths within that universe.

In the final pages of the early draft of *Cat's Cradle*, the narrator (Mr. Vonnegut) and Bokonon are still talking. Bokonon is giving new prophecies, needed by Mr. Vonnegut to do so. The holy man is telling how each character will die, which of course is in his power to do, as he is a creation of Kurt Vonnegut, and thus has the power to do anything Kurt Vonnegut deems necessary. When Mr. Vonnegut ran out of characters whose fate he could ask about, save his own, he writes, "I started to ask him how I would die, decided I didn't want to know. He told me anyway. 'A dog,' he said. 'My condolences.'" Following this, on the final page of the early draft is, "'Poo-tee-wee phweet?' said a bird. Somewhere a dog barked. 'Coming,' I said" (*Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut mss.). Vonnegut ends *Slaughterhouse-Five* with, "One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, 'Poo-tee-wee?'" (215), and throughout the book, the phrase "Somewhere a dog barked" is used to tie Billy Pilgrim's time as a captive of the Germans in World War II with his abduction by the Tralfamadorians. This is obviously yet another connecting tendril between two novels, again strengthening the absolute fact that Vonnegut created a connected mythic universe, but it is much more than that. In *Breakfast of Champions*, "Kurt Vonnegut" the narrator is terrified by a dog as he waits for Kilgore Trout. This is a

contrived fear, of course, as Vonnegut the author places “Vonnegut” the narrator just out of the reach of the fictional dog. Is this fear that “Vonnegut” the narrator of *Breakfast of Champions* feels perhaps a residual effect of Bokonon’s death-prophecy to the Mr. Vonnegut of an early *Cat’s Cradle*? The fact that this portion of *Cat’s Cradle* was edited out is perhaps more telling – that a “Vonnegut” narrator retains a fear that the reader has no backstory for – because it illustrates the key to understanding Vonnegut’s “postmodern iconography,” and in developing a social theory from its depictions.

A lack of freewill through intense normalization, a search for purpose, and contrived meaning and self-deception are so engrained in the reality of humanity that the very author who establishes the vehicle for the theory is equally beholden to it. Just like Philip Castle, Mr. Vonnegut was told how he was going to die, and instead of acknowledging the impossibility of prophecy, a future Vonnegut character/narrator carries the fear of that prophecy with him. Bokonon gave Mr. Vonnegut a framework for a personal narrative, and he ran with it. In one final moment of *Zah-mah-ki-bo*, Vonnegut predicted the circumstances of his own death: “Outside the brownstone, as he and Flour reached the bottom steps, the little dog spun around to see if he was coming. He tripped over her leash, pitched forward full-length, and struck the right side of his face on the sidewalk, losing consciousness instantly” (Shields 415). Vonnegut died from this injury, and thus completed his own predicted death.

Vonnegut’s entire *oeuvre* is the author’s own cat’s cradle, his own attempt to create a narrative for himself. The tenets of his social theory, facets of humanity’s existence, represent the fingers, the narrative of the text is the lengths of string that stretch from tenet to tenet, and the myth is the meaning we, both critics and casual

readers, assign to the patterns contained within. The characters identity doesn't matter, nor does the self-narration they apply to the framework of myth, but it is the myth itself that creates the foundation for the growth in Vonnegut's social theory. Vonnegut's unavoidable presence within the patterns of his own cat's cradle, his own self-narration, traceable from *Player Piano* to *Cat's Cradle*, from *Slaughterhouse-Five* to *Timequake*, simply encapsulates the absolute nature of humanity because Vonnegut can't even get out of his own way in adherence with these tenets to establish the tenets. Once inside his own cat's cradle, Vonnegut finds that, despite the truth he uncovered regarding humankind's circumstances, that there was still "*No damn cat, and no damn cradle.*" And thus, Vonnegut finds himself continuously compelled to deliver bits of compassionate, humanist *foma* to help himself and his readers cope with the lack of cat, and the lack of cradle.

Vonnegut came to these conclusions in what is undoubtedly a diversely connected postmodern mythic universe. The early novels within this universe develop a mythic foundation on which later novels add nuance and allude to, and Vonnegut continued to meticulously mold his social theory in his constructed universe. The nature of Vonnegut's depictions, as well as his own relationship with his fiction, is evident of the universality of that social theory. In the light of these revelations, Vonnegut studies must be considered not only as a study of literature, but as a study of a distinct anthropological field of thought, of a meticulously crafted philosophy that utilizes fiction to inform its audience, which can be used to analyze other fiction, as well as basic human interaction. Is Vonnegut's oeuvre an iconography of American life? Certainly, but it is also a contribution to postmodern theory that can be utilized to analyze works outside of

Vonnegut's library. Analysis of Vonnegut's fourteen novels and countless short stories should not be pursued to solely discover what Vonnegut was saying within his stories, but what the theory behind Vonnegut's fiction can inform us about the world.

WORKS CITED

Bogar, Adam. "Can a Machine Be a Gentleman?: Machine Ethics and Ethical Machines."

Critical Insights: Kurt Vonnegut. Ed. Robert T. Tally Jr. Amenia: Grey House, 2013. 249-267. Print.

Cat's Cradle, Vonnegut mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Davis, Todd. *Kurt Vonnegut's Crusade*. Albany: State U of New York, 2006. 97-118. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Toronto: Vintage, 1977. Print.

Hume, Kathryn. "Kurt Vonnegut and the Myths and Symbols of Meaning." *Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut*. Ed. Robert Merrill. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 201-216. Print.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. *Vonnegut in Fact: The Public Spokesmanship of Personal Fiction*. Columbia: U of South Carolina, 1998. Print.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. *Kurt Vonnegut's America*. Columbia: U of South Carolina, 2009. Print.

Lee, Charles. "New Terms and Goons." Rev. of *Player Piano*, by Kurt Vonnegut. *Saturday Review* 30 August 1952: 11.

Leeds, Marc. *The Vonnegut Encyclopedia: An Authorized Compendium*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994. Print.

- Mentak, Said. "Humane Harmony: Environmentalism and Culture in Vonnegut's Writings." *Critical Insights: Kurt Vonnegut*. Ed. Robert Tally Jr. Amenia: Grey House, 2013. 249-267. Print.
- Mustazza, Leonard. *Forever Pursuing Genesis: The Myth of Eden in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*. Cranbury: Associated UP, 1990. Print.
- Pardee, Shiela Ellen. "Anthropology across the Universe: Folk Societies in the Early Novels of Kurt Vonnegut." *Critical Insights: Kurt Vonnegut*. Ed. Robert Tally. Amenia: Grey House, 2013. 185-206. Print.
- Player Piano*, Vonnegut mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Prescott, Peter S. "Nothing Sacred." *Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut*. Ed. Robert Merrill. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 39. Print.
- Ritter, Jess. "Teaching Kurt Vonnegut on the Firing Line." *The Vonnegut Statement*, ed. Jerome Klinkowitz and John Somer, New York: Delacorte Press, 1973. 31-42. Print.
- Shields, Charles J. *And so It Goes. Kurt Vonnegut: A Life*. New York. Henry and Holt. 2011. Print.
- The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Tally, Robert. *Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel*. New York: Continuum International, 2011. Print.
- Updike, John. "All's Well in Skyscraper National Park." *Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut*. Ed. Robert Merrill. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 40-46. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Breakfast of Champions*. Dial Press Paperback ed. New York: Dell, 1973. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Cat's Cradle*. Dial Press Paperback ed. New York: Dial, 1963. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Conversations*. Ed. William Rodney Allen. 5th ed. Jackson. University Press of Mississippi. 1988. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Galapagos*. Dial Press Paperback ed. New York: Dial, 1985. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. Dial Press Paperback ed. New York: Dial, 1965. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Player Piano*. Dial Press Paperback ed. New York: Dial, 1979. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Sirens of Titan*. Dell Paperback ed. New York: Dial, 1959. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slapstick, or Lonesome No More*. Dial Press Paperback ed. New York: Dell, 1976. Print.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Dial Press Paperback ed. New York: Dial, 1969. Print.