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THE ATTITUDES OF KURT VONNEGUT, JR., TOWARDS THE FAMILY

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THE ATTITUDES OF KURT VONNEGUT, JR.,
TOWARDS THE FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

Vonnegut's solutions to the lonely American experience--
Bokononism, loving whoever is around to be loved, seeking the philosophical outlook of a Tralfamadorian--may seem outlandish, and may well justify the critics' labelling of his work as "sentimental". This may be more strongly the case because his readers tend to emphasize his novels and, even then, to study each as an almost isolated segment of his writings. But Vonnegut's later work seems to encourage a re-focusing of interest in his entire development. In Slapstick, of 1976, Vonnegut comes to terms with ideals of the family system--ideals that once dominated his short stories and may have motivated him to search for replacement systems in the first place. Slapstick, with its memories of the writer's own extended family, does seem to suggest that Vonnegut acutely missed its support. And it fictively develops an America in which all citizens are united into these families once more. But the novel also indicates a disdain for Western Society, when it is placed beside the comical but less deteriorating one of the Communist Chinese. Wilbur Swain, master mind of the system of artificially extended families, finally even deserts America for escape into the Afterlife. Vonnegut's next novel, Jailbird, advances from this latter novel's floundering in purpose to propose a more economically sound basis for social re-unification. The section of Palm Sunday currently available suggests that Vonnegut carries his development still further--is able, finally, to reflect back upon a crisis period in his life

that threw him from the smooth success of his novels into the failure of Happy Birthday, Wanda June, chaos in Breakfast of Champions, and re-emphasis--as we have noted--upon family values in Slapstick.

We thus follow through the family situations in his dull and neglected short stories, his later experiments to discover a suitable way for men to relate, his retreat to support of the extended family in Slapstick, and shift to sturdier perspectives in Jailbird. We may combine these movements with Vonnegut's eventual ability to reflect clearly, in Palm Sunday, upon the crisis of his children's exodus, and upon the way this affected his vision of himself as parent and spouse--indeed, upon the way it affects the self-visions of too many of his contemporaries. And, from these many developments in Vonnegut's work, we are induced to see not only his sentimentalism, but his seriousness--his determination to surface with an understanding, and perhaps with some form of solution to the problems of alienation and loneliness.

I would like to thank Dr. Wood for his help during the preparation of my thesis, and my Readers for their suggestions.

A CHRONOLOGY OF VONNEGUT WORKS DIRECTLY DISCUSSED

- 1950 "EPICAC"; "The Euphio Question"; "The Foster Portfolio"
1951 "More Stately Mansions"
1952 Player Piano
1953 "D.P."
1954 "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow"
1955 "Next Door"
1958 "The Manned Missiles"
1959 Sirens of Titan
1960 "Long Walk to Forever"
1962 "Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son"
1963 Cat's Cradle; "The Hyannis Port Story"
1965 God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater
1968 Welcome to the Monkey House; "Yes, We Have No Nirvanas"
1969 Slaughterhouse-Five
1970 Happy Birthday, Wanda June; "Address to the Graduating Class at Bennington College, 1970"; "Biafra: A People Betrayed"
1971 "Address to the National Institute of Arts and Letters"
1973 Breakfast of Champions; ("Playboy Interview")
1975 Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon
1976 Slapstick; ("Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Chicago- June 8, 1976")
1979 Jailbird
1981 "The Sexual Revolution" from Palm Sunday

I

INTRODUCTION

The modern American writer may often sense "the values of American life...to be...irrelevant to the real human condition."¹ He may thus find himself "exploring in much of his work...the problems of identity and individuality, the need for relief from dehumanization."² Max Shulz, when discussing Vonnegut, generalizes to suggest a response to this exploration: "what does a man do for a sense of purpose in life? If he is a Pynchon, a Nabokov, a Barth, a Borges...he re-invents himself and his universe."³

This thesis will focus upon one Vonnegut universe--Slapstick's society of artificially extended families. Before beginning, however, we may consider some universes which the writer earlier creates. Sirens of Titan plays with a philosophical system proposed by William Niles Rumfoord. His special power lies in his having travelled through a chrono-synclastic infundibulum. Taking him "everywhere" in space and time, it allows him knowledge of the future and thus, power to impress adherents to his system of thought. Upon its basis, he founds a Church of God the Utterly Indifferent. Vonnegut gives it the motto, "Take Care of the People, and God Almighty Will Take Care of Himself."⁴ Man thus finds peace and freedom in his recognition of the finite effectiveness of God. As the Reverend C. Horner Redwine puts it, "O Lord Most High, what a glorious weapon is Thy Apathy, for we have unsheathed it, have thrust and slashed mightily with it, and the claptrap that has so often enslaved us or driven us into the madhouse

lies slain!" (Sirens of Titan, p.215). The belief is manifest in followers inflictions of handicaps upon themselves:

One old man, whose only advantage was excellent eyesight, had spoiled that eyesight by wearing his wife's spectacles.

A dark young man, whose lithe, predacious sex appeal could not be spoiled by bad clothes and bad manners, had handicapped himself with a wife who was nauseated by sex.

The dark young man's wife, who had reason to be vain about her Phi Beta Kappa key, had handicapped herself with a husband who read nothing but comic books.

(Sirens of Titan, p. 224).

By yielding up advantages to handicaps, "no one could then reproach you for taking advantage of the random ways of luck"(p. 227). This is the most negative result to rise from a recognition of indifference. One that is slightly more positive arises from Malachi Constant's winning "so late in life the love of Beatrice Rumfoord"(p. 305). Originally, he, Beatrice and their son felt only "suppressed indignation at having been forced to be a family at all"(p. 291). Such a feeling could be understandable, since neither Malachi nor Beatrice had ever planned to be sent into space together, or to have a child. Yet Malachi is able to say that he loves Beatrice, after they have endured years together on isolating Titan. "It took us that long to realize that a purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever else is around to be loved."⁵ The reflection prophesizes Claire Minton's observation in the next novel, Cat's Cradle, that "Americans...are forever searching for love in forms it never takes, in places it can never be. It must have something to do with the vanished frontier."⁶

The main spokesman of Cat's Cradle is not Claire, however; it is the narrator, Jonah. And he did not begin so enlightened.

Rather, he once started writing "a Christian book" entitled The Day the World Ended, when an atomic bomb was actually dropped on Hiroshima, and Jonah converted to Bokononism (Cat's Cradle, p. 11). Instead of "Render unto Caesar...", Bokonon commands, "pay no attention to Caesar. Caesar doesn't have the slightest idea what's really going on" (p. 73). Yet, "all of the true things" Bokonon wishes to speak, he also declares "shameless lies" (p. 14). His followers celebrate their faith in an absurd foot-touching ceremony:

We Bokononists believe that it is impossible to be sole-to-sole with another person without loving the person, provided the feet of both persons are clean and nicely tended.

The basis of the foot ceremony is this 'Calypso':

We will touch your feet, yes,
 Yes, for all we're worth,
 And we will love each other, yes,
 Yes, like we love our Mother Earth.

(Cat's Cradle, p. 189).

As Klinkowitz explains,

The value of Bokononism...is that it makes possible what Scott terms the 'cosmic katharsis', which involves 'such a restoration of our confidence in the realm of finitude as enables us to see the daily occasions of our earth-bound career as being not irrelevant inconveniences but as the possible roads into what is ultimately significant in life.'

Cat's Cradle thus develops another system which suggests that recognition of the finite turns man's eyes to what simply is, and allows him peace to seek basic comfort and fulfillment. Bodtke explains Bokononism as a simple assertion of warmer values in the face of dehumanization:

The insane absence in Dr. Hoenniker of anything resembling human feeling for his family or any larger social concern is contrasted ironically in the novel with the realistic compassion of a spiritual con-man called Bokonon who creates a religion for the people of San Lorenzo, the island where Hoenniker's children all end up. Bokonon's religion is based on a simple credo: whatever makes people happy in this miserable world is good.

One could similarly view Billy Pilgrim's time-travelling in Slaughterhouse-Five.⁹ Perhaps seeking comfort from his monotonous life as an optometrist, and from the painful vividness of the Dresden fire-bombing, Billy finds himself within a dome on Tralfamadore, with the naked "pussycat", Montana Wildhack.

The solution indicated as forming the main focus of this thesis is most freely developed in Slapstick---a novel originally titled Relatives.¹⁰ Wilbur Swain, voted into the American Presidency with the slogan "Lonesome no more!", uses his powers of office to develop and enforce a system of artificially extended families. The novel is a response to Vonnegut's observation:

Until recent times, you know, human beings usually had a permanent community of relatives. They had dozens of homes to go to. So when a married couple had a fight, one or the other could go to a house three doors down and stay with a close relative until he was feeling tender again. Or if a kid got so fed up with his parents that he couldn't stand it, he could march over to his uncle's for a while. And this is no longer possible. Each family is locked into its little box. The neighbours aren't relatives. There aren't other houses where people can go and be cared for. When Nixon is pondering what's happening to America- 'Where have all the old values gone?' and all that- the answer is perfectly simple. We're lonesome. We don't have enough friends or relatives anymore.¹¹

This writer's emphasis of concern upon the family will be discussed in two parts. The first section will deal with background factors that may have given Vonnegut a sense of dissatisfaction with the contemporary American family, and may have encouraged a respect for traditional values. The second will suggest reasons for Vonnegut's emphasis of these values in Slapstick. This novel's concluding escapism will also be considered in relation to the confused treatment of the microscopic Chinese. Vonnegut's next novel, Jailbird, will then be studied as a work that retrieves and maintains the spirit

of the extended family, while it more openly considers the alternative social systems of socialism and communism. It will be suggested that Vonnegut was often conscious of these systems during his earlier career, and that his mind begged full attention to them as he wrote of the Chinese in Slapstick. The writer's eventual ability to yield full space to these systems once they demanded his attention, and his ability to synthesize these ideas with the spirit of his earlier experiments exposes Vonnegut's serious and consistent desire to understand and perhaps discover a solution to the lonely American experience.

II

BACKGROUND TO THE EXTENDED FAMILY OF SLAPSTICK

1. The Mid-Western Moral Scale

Vonnegut's respect for the family works in support of a traditional system of values; his irony functions upon a clear understanding of what are often called "middle-class" attitudes. As Giannonne reflects, "Decency, respect, neighborliness, success, and security are what his characters look for; and in the end, that commonplace search is rendered so tenderly that we can only say that middle America also gave Vonnegut a moral scale."¹ Lundquist, too, cautions that "it is a mistake to conceive of Vonnegut's significance entirely in terms of his popular success".

One surprising consideration is that Vonnegut is a thoroughly middle-class writer who is, in some of his work at least, an apologist for the very kind of life he seems to be attacking. Vonnegut writes from a vantage point that is consistently middle-class....²

Very much in keeping with this "vantage point", he often shows a strong distrust of unhindered intellectualism. "In novel after novel, Vonnegut warns of the intellect's potential destructive power, showing us how its discoveries can prompt a person to try to rule over life, and death, and nature as would God."³ The chauffeur, Lawes, tells "Harvard man" Starbuck of another Harvard graduate, in Jailbird:

'His daddy was a big landlord,' said Lawes. 'When the communists came, they made his daddy kneel down in front of all his tenants in the village, and then they chopped off his head with a sword.

'But the son could still be a communist- after that?' I said.

'He said his daddy really had been a very bad landlord,' he said.

'Well,' I said, 'that's Harvard for you, I guess.'⁴

Vonnegut seems to maintain that bonds of family should prevail over intellectual considerations in a better world. This conclusion is highlighted in Slapstick as sister and brother, Eliza and Wilbur, are threatened with separation by the thrice doctored child specialist, Cordelia Cordiner. Their normally meek and mild mother, who is repulsed by their extraordinary ugliness (they are almost monsters), rages to their defense in a rare and warming display of liveliness. The children threaten suicide if separated; the arrogant Dr. Cordiner laughs, since the personality tests she has administered them show such a gesture impossible.

Her saying this so jovially was a tactical mistake on her part, for it caused something in Mother to snap. The atmosphere in the room became electrified as Mother stopped being a weak and polite and credulous doll.

Mother did not say anything at first. But she had clearly become subhuman in the finest sense. She was a coiled female panther, suddenly willing to tear the throats out of any number of childrearing experts- in defense of her young.

It was the one and only time that she would ever be irrationally committed to being the mother of Eliza and me.

So Mother got up and went over to her, not touching her, and not looking her in the eyes, either. Mother spoke to her throat, and in a tone between a purr and a growl, she called Dr. Cordiner an 'over-dressed little sparrow-fart'.

(Slapstick, p. 101).

The spirit of the show may simply boil down to Vonnegut's dislike of arrogance. In any case, some strange coalitions result. One of his short works, "The Hyannis Port Story" (1963), is a case in point. A politically uncommitted storm-window installer, the narrator, is working at the home of Commodore William Rumfoord. The Commodore is a passionate Republican, and has the misfortune to find himself a neighbour to the Kennedys. He is incensed by their activities, and has nurtured a similar rage in his son, Robert. When he is finally

silenced, however, no political changes bring it about. Rather, political differences are dissolved in the minds of Rumfoord and his son by a love affair; young Robert falls for a Kennedy niece who is on visit from Ireland.

Supper that night in the Rumfoord cottage was sad and beautiful and happy and strange. There were Robert and his girl, and me, and the Commodore and his lady.

That girl was so intelligent, so warm, and so beautiful that she broke my heart every time I looked at her. That was why supper was so peculiar. The girl was so desirable, and the love between her and Robert was so sweet and clean, that nobody could think of anything but silly little things to say. We mainly ate in silence.

Even on the international level, Vonnegut early chooses to explore conflict as it affects the family. "The Manned Missiles" of 1958 is comprised of letters exchanged between an American, Charles Ashland, and Mikhail Ivankov of Russia. Both are fathers of military men involved in an episode which supposedly causes furor in the United Nations. The Russians had sent-up a space ship carrying Ivankov's son, and Ashland's was sent with a war-head to intercept it. They somehow collided. "Mr. Ashland", writes Ivankov, "you would have liked my son. Everybody liked Stepan. He was a man of peace."⁷

The reply:

I tell you, Mr. Ivankov, I have had a bellyfull of experts. If you ask me, our boys were experted to death. Your experts would do something, then our experts would answer back with some fancy billion-dollar stunt, and then your experts would answer back with something fancier, and look, what finally happened finally happened. ("The Manned Missiles", p. 271).

"Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son" from a 1962 edition of the Ladies Home Journal is perhaps an extreme example of Vonnegut's conservatism--and one which eerily forshadows his own situation eight years later, while writing Happy Birthday Wanda June. George

Murra, married at eighteen, deserts his wife for the beautiful actress, Gloria Hilton. He speaks to the narrator frankly:

"'Whatever you do,' he said, 'don't make the same mistake I made. You keep that home of yours together, no matter what. I know it must be lousy from time to time but, believe me, there are ways of life that are ten thousand times lousier.'"⁸ The conclusion: Murra manages to gain reacceptance by his wife and son. Everybody cries for joy:

'You tell her we're having a nice time, and I've been terribly unhappy, and I am through with Gloria Hilton, and I want her to take me back on any terms whatsoever,' said Murra.

The boy told his mother, and she cried, and the boy cried, and Murra cried, and I cried.

And then Murra's first wife told him he could come back any time he wanted to. And that was that.

("Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son", p. 205).

The strongly pro-family attitude in these stories may have been partially derived or encouraged by a very secondary factor. Family magazine stories were Vonnegut's earliest source of income after he left his public relations position at General Electric, and the suggestion has been made that he may have been influenced by his family-oriented audience.⁹ But, even at the time of his writing them, many of his short stories seem too personal for contrivance, although--once more sophisticated--he looks back on them with embarrassment. As he puts it, in his Preface to Welcome to the Monkey House:

In honour of the marriage that worked, I include in this collection a sickeningly slick love story from The Ladies Home Journal, God help us, entitled by them 'The Long Walk to Forever'. The title I gave it, I think, was 'Hell to Get Along With'.

It describes an afternoon I spent with my wife-to-be. Shame, shame, to have lived scenes from a woman's magazine.

(Preface, Welcome to the Monkey House, p. xi).

Catherine watched him grow smaller in the long perspective of shadows and trees, knew that if he stopped and turned now, if he called to her, she would run to him. She would have no choice.

Newt did stop. He did turn. He did call. 'Catherine,' he called.

She ran to him, put her arms around him, could not speak.¹⁰

The conventional attitudes of these stories are also hard to dismiss as geared to sales because Vonnegut writes a play much like them, quite awhile later, and when he is no longer short of money. The play is Happy Birthday, Wanda June, and is published in 1970. It is like the stories in that Harold, father of the stage family, returns home after years in the jungle to find himself scorned for his notions of adventure and for disrespectful absence from his family. Penelope, his long abandoned wife, points out that "heroes basically hate home and never stay there very long, and make awful messes while they're there."¹¹

Vonnegut tells us in its Preface that Michael Cane, who agreed to direct this play, "was running away from home and some other things--for a little while. So was I. So was Lester" (Goldsmith), (Happy Birthday, Wanda June, p. viii).

The main trouble was with the author, who didn't really know what he was doing- except running away from home. There I was: all alone in a tiny penthouse borrowed from a friend, six doors down and fifteen floors up from the Theatre de Lys, where the actors were rehearsing...

(Happy Birthday, Wanda June, pp. xii-xiii).

The writer, perhaps off-balance here, creates a play so similar to his short stories because it lacks the smooth and cynical tone of his novels. Awareness of this more innocent and straightforward approach in his non-novels may be important because it causes one to ask whether the tone of Vonnegut's prose should be noticed more

as ironic with currents of sentimentalism, or as innocently straightforward with a development of irony in the genre of the novel.

2. Vonnegut's Distancing From These Values

The reader, if he had to choose from the two descriptions, would probably side with a description of Vonnegut's tone as "ironic" because the play and short stories are hard to take seriously in the presence of his so much more successful novels. While his stories and play remain embarrassingly awkward or dull, the novels excel in developing smoothly ironic effects. Yet, since one may no longer be able to dismiss the stories and play as mere money-making efforts, one is inclined to ask why they differ so drastically from the novels. One might be especially curious if one were to consider that "The Manned Missiles" is completed just a year before Sirens of Titan is published (1959) and "The Long Walk to Forever" merely a year later, "Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son" is completed a full two years later (1961), the successful Cat's Cradle is published in 1963, that same year the soggy "Hyannis Port Story" is finished, the successful God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater and Slaughterhouse-Five follow (1965 and 1969), then the dull play, Happy Birthday, Wanda June (1970). A separate study might be made before one could seriously suggest reasons for the absence of a parallel development between the play, stories and the novels. Yet a partial explanation might be advanced. By no means all, but most of these short stories, and the play, work upon the backdrop or within the context of a typical American household.¹² Such a context could be contrasted with the machine world of Player Piano (published in 1952), the solar

system of Sirens of Titan, the tropical dictatorship of San Lorenzo in Cat's Cradle, the span of situations in God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, and the time-travelling world of Billy Pilgrim in Slaughterhouse-Five. Perhaps the confined domestic worlds leave Vonnegut short of breath, or without room to spread his wings. And without the space, he cannot allow himself distance for ironic reflection upon the "middle class" mores of his subjects. So, as we have noted, the short stories and play have a disappointing flatness. Their directness is also embarrassing. Says Herbert, in "The Foster Portfolio":

'I have a wonderful wife and child, a nice house for them, and a car. And I've earned every penny of the way. I'm living up to the full measure of my responsibilities. I'm proud to say I'm everything my mother wanted me to be, and nothing my father was.'

'Do you mind my asking what your father was?'

'I don't enjoy talking about him. Home and family meant nothing to him. His real love was for low-down music and honky-tonks, and for the trash in them. ¹³

Yet, where the contexts may be less imaginative than those of his novels, and irony if not absent, quite flat, Vonnegut still undercuts his characters by giving them compulsions that are almost mad, or hysterical. Herbert considers maintenance of his mediocre existence so crucial that he avoids exposure of two details which disqualify him from the roles of poverty-stricken householder and dull husband. He has inherited a fortune, and cannot resist the "low-down music and honkey-tonks". By hiding the fortune, he has an excuse to work an extra few nights a week--playing music as his father did:

Nobody could do anything for Herbert. Herbert already had what he wanted. He had had it long before the inheritance or I intruded. He had the respectability his mother had hammered into him. But just as priceless as that was an income not quite

big enough to go around. It left him no alternative but- in the holy names of wife, child and home- to play piano in a dive, and breathe smoke, and drink gin, to be Firehouse Harris, his father's son, three nights out of seven.

("The Foster Portfolio", p. 68).

"More Stately Mansions", of 1951, displays an obvious example of insanity enmeshed in an orderly context. The narrator and his wife, Anne, move to a new area and meet Grace and George McClellan. Grace scrutinizes Anne's home and floods her with decorating suggestions from Better Homes and Gardens. So obsessed is Grace with decorating that Anne and her husband are shocked upon viewing the woman's living-room.

The couch springs had burst through the bottom and were resting nakedly on the floor. The chief illumination came from a single lightbulb in a cobwebbed chandelier with sockets for six. An electric extension cord, patched with friction tape, hung from another of the sockets and led to an iron on an ironing board in the middle of the living-room.¹⁴

The rooms she imagines are contained in filed, magazine suggestions. But, when George comes upon an inheritance and Grace is in hospital, Anne decides to do Grace's home according to the filed plans. The only flaw in Anne's effort is her failure to find the exact colour of fabric for a slipcover and living-room curtains. Grace returns home to find her house redecorated painstakingly, and precisely in accordance with her plans. Yet, her only comment, upon seeing the house, concerns the substitute shade of fabric--and only to note, "That material held its colour just perfectly for years, and then, poof, it fades like this in a few weeks" ("More Stately Mansions", p. 137). We have suggested that stories such as these--worked within common family settings--may not then afford Vonnegut sufficient distance for ironic reflection. The stories may consequently

have a dullness about them, and compensate for escape into irony by a character's resort into some absurd state of mind--a form of release from the stifling family situation. Harold, of Vonnegut's play, actually does flee to the jungle, though the main action of the play is similarly confined to a household setting with its own absurdities--to an apartment, for instance, with a front doorbell which roars like a lion when pressed.

Slaughterhouse-Five appeared in 1969, five years after the latest short story of Welcome to the Monkey House was composed, and a year before the disturbed Vonnegut so awkwardly composed Happy Birthday Wanda June. It develops on the points we discuss, though Billy Pilgrim is not a complete duplication of Herbert and Grace. His unusual mental activities, which were earlier mentioned in this thesis, may be due to the stress of warfare--his first time traveling occurs while he is lost behind enemy lines in Germany (p. 43). His "contact" with Tralfamadore may also be no more than a result of brain damage incurred during a serious plane accident. His daughter is convinced of this (p. 28); and, at the very time that there is "talk of performing an operation on him later, one which might improve circulation of blood to his brain", Billy's mind is "fizzling and flashing thrillingly...preparing letters and lectures about flying saucers, the negligability of death, and the true nature of time" (p. 190).

Still, his daughter's belief is undercut because his "first" space trip to Tralfamadore occurs "before" his accident--on his daughter's wedding day, in fact. After the celebration, he goes out

on his lawn to meet the spaceship, unable as he is to fall asleep beside his obese wife, Valencia, "nestled like spoons in their big double bed...jiggled by Magic Fingers...Valencia...snoring like a bandsaw"(p. 72). Viewed externally, Billy's situation is another example of the possible blandness of middle-class, family life. As a student optometrist, he marries the ugly daughter of the school's owner. Started in business by this wealthy in-law, Billy settles into a marriage "at least bearable" (p. 120), driving a Cadillac El Dorado Coupe de Ville(p. 57), attending Lions Club meetings (p. 59), and owning "a lovely Georgian home" (p. 61). Keeping in mind that he has been through warfare and a plane accident, we might also believe that Billy is yet another victim of the straining entrapment which subjects Herbert and Grace. "Every so often, for no apparent reason, Billy Pilgrim would find himself weeping...Only the Doctor knew" p. 61). He,

had gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

(Slaughterhouse-Five, p. 23).

He converses with creatures from outer space, who agree that they see "all time as you might see a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is"(p. 85).

Yet, treatment of Billy differs from that of Grace and Herbert for several reasons. Billy's mental state is given a validity of its own, and one which turns to re-evaluate the very context from which it emerges, which looks back to view solid family life in its own,

initial absurdity. The Tralfamadorian concept, or Billy's being "spastic in time" (p. 23), is reflected in Vonnegut's whole narrative structure, in the novel's flow of events to follow Billy's mental processes. The plot is arranged much as the Tralfamadorians prefer to arrange their stories, the "depths of many marvelous moments all seen at one time" (p. 88). The jumps from one time and place to another, result in juxtapositions which yield strongly ironic comments on the sort of life Billy leads, or follows. Small wonder that wealthy Billy Pilgrim cries in the security and comfort of his Ilium New York home; he is also in Dresden in 1945, beholding a group of girls boiled alive during the fire-bombings (p. 116). The life of a middle-class American is ridiculous in the presence of such barbarism. It is, of course, reduced still further when one takes the Determinist view that time simply is, that the Earth's end "presently" exists in our future--whether it comes about "when" our whole Universe is erroneously blown to bits by a Tralfamadorian testing rocket fuel (p. 117), or by natural processes of change presently and always underway.¹⁵ Vonnegut's development of this expanded consciousness thus yields him ground for ironic comment upon the crazy way of life which would otherwise have shown Billy, like Herbert and Grace, to be mad. The irony resulting from Vonnegut's and Billy's escape from the household mentality, their liberation to develop on this second level, also produces a story of depth around a situation which previously produced only a tone of flatness.

3. The Early Emphasis on A Strong Sense of Family, and Distortion

One asks why Vonnegut works at counter-purposes--why he is so much bound to family situations, and yet so critical of them. Some understanding could be reached by noting details of his own family background. He tells us:

When we were children in Indianapolis, Indiana, it appeared that we would always have an extended family of genuine relatives there. Our parents and grandparents, after all, had grown up there with shoals of siblings and cousins and uncles and aunts. Yes, and their relatives were all cultivated and gentle, and prosperous and spoke German and English gracefully...They might roam the wide world over when they were young, and often have wonderful adventures. But they were all told sooner or later that it was time for them to come home to Indianapolis, and to settle down.¹⁶

Loss of this comfortable base seems due more to external factors than to Vonnegut's rejection.

We lost thousands of years in a very short time-- and then tens of thousands of American dollars after that, and the summer cottages and so on.

And our family became a lot less interesting, especially to itself.

So -by the time the Great Depression and a Second World War were over, it was easy for my brother and my sister and me to wander away from Indianapolis.

And, of all the relatives we left behind, not one could think of a reason why we should come home again.

(Slapstick, p. 7).

Much of Vonnegut's sensitivity to the decline of the family in America may thus have arisen from knowledge of the deterioration in his own once strong and successful one. But Vonnegut's sense of what might have been was perhaps sharpened by his Uncle Alex, whose funeral Vonnegut travelled towards as Slapstick opened. "It used to amuse him", the writer tells us, "to take me on visits to relatives I'd never known I had" (Slapstick, p. 9). Vonnegut's mother may have

instilled a sense of lost connections in a much stronger and negative way.

I thought of my mother, who drove me around Indianapolis one time during the Great Depression, to impress me with how rich and powerful my maternal grandfather had been. She showed me where his brewery had been, where some of his dream houses had been. Every one of the monuments was a cellar hole.¹⁷

Whether or not Vonnegut's mother ever made him feel unusually guilty is hard to say, but Loeb notes of Billy Pilgrim's attitude when his own mother visits:

he hides under the blanket every time she comes, because she makes him feel 'embarrassed and ungrateful and weak because she had gone to so much trouble to give him life, and to keep that life going, and Billy didn't really like life at all' (p. 88). His mother is thus instrumental in making him feel guilty.¹⁸

Billy's mother may, indeed, have been just another victim of Vonnegut's developed cynicism. For, even in the disillusioned Breakfast of Champions, the writer says of the American novel's search for father figures:

It seems to me that really truthful American novels would have the heroes and heroines alike looking for mothers instead. This needn't be embarrassing. It's simply true.

A mother is much more useful.

I wouldn't feel particularly good if I found another father.
(Breakfast of Champions, p. 268).

This desire for a mother, and his sense of lost connections may have been instilled more radically by Mrs. Vonnegut's suicide, committed while her son was still in uniform during the Second War. "My mother...had declined to go on living, since she could no longer be what she had been at the time of her marriage- one of the richest women in town" (Jailbird, p. xi). Yet both parents believed "the world they loved had been destroyed by World War I".¹⁹ Perhaps

One cannot easily say, then, that Vonnegut's creation of this heaven, or his affiliation with the Unitarians give him a blind faith in the idea of just rewards. But they could indicate that his own family's "affirmative" denial of any god or afterlife is too blatant for him, not entirely agreeable to Vonnegut as an individual.

His family may have supplied him with positive influences elsewhere, however. And Alex Vonnegut was probably active in this respect too. He may have served as a sort of guide to the writer: displaying concern that Vonnegut read properly as a child (Slapstick, p. 9) and find suitable employment after the war" (Jailbird, p. xi). His brother, who discovered the principle of iodine-induced rainfall, is a source of pride. "My only brother eight years older than I, is a successful scientist. His special field is physics as it relates to clouds. His name is Bernard, and he is funnier than I am."²³ Though he has also written, "my longest experience with common decency, surely, has been with my older brother" (Slapstick, p. 3), his only sister was his closest friend and a source of creative strength. "She was heavenly to look at, and graceful...She was a sculptress" (Preface, Welcome to the Monkey House, p. ix). Her influence lasted a long while after her death, when Vonnegut was thirty-five. He says of her, twenty years later:

For my own part, though: it would have been catastrophic if I had forgotten my sister at once. I had never told her so, but she was the secret of whatever artistic unity I had ever achieved. She was the secret of my technique. Any creation which had any wholeness and harmoniousness, I suspect, was made by an artist or inventor with an audience of one in mind.

Yes, and she was nice enough, or nature was nice enough, to allow me to feel her presence for a number of years after she died... (Slapstick, p. 15).

Slapstick, which Vonnegut believes to be the closest he may ever come to autobiography, depicts, he says, "myself and my sister as monsters" (p. 19). Wilbur's account of his painful and crippling separation from Eliza may thus well represent Vonnegut's own loss of Alice. Wilbur is only half a mind without his sister.

Yet, other relatives remained to provide artistic support, and further pride. He mentions that his mother's father was the wealthy owner of a brewery and, more to the point, that his grandfather was the first licensed architect of Indiana. The writer's father was also an architect of some early success, and clearly he regards their efforts to have been as creative as his own. He even seems to identify with them for this reason.

...going into the arts in this society is taken as a startling thing to do, and I've said in lectures, you know, if you want to really hurt your parents and you don't have courage enough to become a homosexual, the least you can do is go into the arts. But in my case my father was an artist, and my grandfather was an artist, and so I've just simply taken over the family steam laundry.

("Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.", p. 295).

Yet another Uncle, John, was an actual writer. In 1971, he wrote "An Account of the Ancestry of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., By An Ancient Friend of His Family". Vonnegut tells us in 1976, after John's recent death, that this uncle never wished it to be known that he was an author, perhaps following the lesson of Edgar Lee Masters. Both men were lawyers, and Masters had lost the trust of his clients when they discovered that he was also a writer, as Vonnegut recalls.

But this uncle, and Alex, and his parents, grandparents and siblings seem to have left Vonnegut with a pride in his family, even while it was shadowed by decline and a sense of loss.

4. This Writer's Identification with His Father, and His Need for Leadership

As we noted earlier, Vonnegut's father fell into unemployment during the Depression. The writer says of a luncheon meeting with him, just after the Second War:

Father by then had lost all interest in politics and history and economics and such things. He had taken to saying that people talked too much. Sensations meant more to him than ideas-- especially the feel of natural materials at his fingertips. When he was dying about twenty years later, he would say that he wished he had been a potter, making mud pies all day long.

To me that was sad-- because he was so well educated. It seemed to me that he was throwing his knowledge and intelligence away, just as a retreating soldier might throw away his rifle and pack. (Jailbird, p. xi-xii).

The very disillusioned Kilgore Trout of Breakfast of Champions is often associated with him.

'Look up, Mr. Trout,' I said, and I waited patiently. 'Kilgore-?' The old man looked up, and he had my father's wasted face when my father was a widower-- when my father was an old man. (Breakfast of Champions, p. 293).

His voice was my father's voice. I heard my father...Here is what Kilgore Trout cried out to me in my father's voice: 'Make me young, make me young, make me young!' (Breakfast of Champions, pp. 294-95).

Vonnegut seems not only to regret his father's retreat and loss of vitality, he seems to identify with it much as we noted him identifying with his father as an artist. Throughout Breakfast of Champions, Vonnegut's preoccupation with the problems of his father--failed in maturity--and of Kilgore--aging and yet remaining the misunderstood artist--accompany the writer's consciousness that he verges on his own fiftieth birthday. And Vonnegut's message is not much more positive than Kilgore's would have been. "There is no order in the world around us...we must adapt ourselves to the requirements

of chaos. He says his father's impulse to throw everything away left him with "an air of retreat...always...a companion".

So I have always been enchanted by brave veterans like Powers Hapgood, and some others who were still full of ideas of how victory might yet be snatched from the jaws of defeat. If I am going to go on living, I have thought, I had better follow them. (Jailbird, p. xiii).

He thus seeks fathers in individuals like his Uncle Alex, the labour leader Powers Hapgood, and perhaps even in Knox Berger. Vonnegut dedicates Welcome to the Monkey House to him with the words, "Ten days older than I am. He has been a very good father to me." The understanding of yearning one may have for paternal leadership is focused upon in the short story, "D.P." (1953). In this case, the need is carried to extremes. D.P. is, literally, a displaced person--an orphaned and homeless Negro boy living in Germany after the Second War. Though the boy knows no English, he comes upon a Black, American G.I. and is convinced by their similar skin colours that he has actually discovered his father. The Sergeant wishes to return him to his orphanage:

Joe dug his fingers into the sergeant's forearms. 'Papa! No- papa! I want to stay with you.'

'Look, sonny, I ain't your papa,' said the sergeant helplessly. 'I ain't your papa.'

'Papa!'

'Man, he's glued to you, ain't he, sergeant?' said a soldier. 'Looks like you ain't never goin' to pry him loose. You got yourself a boy there, sarge, and he's got hisself a papa.'

The sergeant walked over to the jeep with Joe in his arms. 'Come on, now,' he said, 'you leggo, little Joe, so's I can drive...'.²⁴

One would expect such a tale to carry with it a breathtakingly happy ending. The outcome is tentative, however; the Sergeant promises to return for the boy after his military duties are completed. A

set of tearful, concluding lines, which we have already read, is the result of another father and son problem, and one which is definitely resolved. In "Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son", the narrator is told of Murra's child, "When I divorced his mother and married Gloria Hilton, the last thing he said was, 'Father, you're contemptible. I don't want to hear another word from you as long as I live.'" (p. 200). Murra confesses his misery, ardently repents, and yet the son refuses to forgive.

Murra sat down in a chair with his head in his hands. 'What do I do now?' he said. 'Maybe this is the punishment I deserve. I guess what I do is just grit my teeth and take it.'

'I can only think of one other thing,' I said.

'What's that?' he said.

'Kick him in the pants,' I said.

("Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son", p. 204).

Strangely enough, this simple solution works. Murra's son accepts him as father again, phones his mother to inform her of Murra's desire to return home and, as we know, the promise of a reunion leaves everybody tearful. When the narrator returns home, his late, drunken and impolite arrival puts him in trouble with his own wife. She departs in anger the following morning, and the narrator's son overhears her say that "maybe she'd never come back".

'Father-' said the boy.

'What?' I said.

'What did you do to Mother last night?' he said. He took a very high and mighty tone.

'Mind your own business,' I said, 'or you're liable to get a swift kick in the pants.'

That calmed him right down.

("Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son", p. 206).

Of course, one could ask whether or not such a response to the feelings

of one's children is valid--especially in Murra's case, since his son was resentful over nothing less than his father's desertion of his mother for a movie queen. The child was, in a sense, an ideal son to his mother, and Vonnegut does show the boy's lengthy resistance as effective in weakening Murra back to the side of right.

In Happy Birthday, Wanda June a son again assumes the awkward position between father and mother, but with a difference in this case. The father has long been absent, is believed lost on an expedition to the wilds, and the son, Paul, respects him in his absence. As Paul's mother, Penelope, prepares to enjoy an evening out with vacuum-cleaner salesman, Shuttle, the boy complains, "It's my father's birthday- that's all. That's all. Who cares about that?" (Happy Birthday, Wanda June, p. 23). Yet Paul has been too long in the company of meek Shuttle and the mild mannered physician from across the hall (who intends to marry his mother). For, when Paul's ideal father returns, the boy is soon terrified by the man's rough authoritarianism. "There is a tension in all of us here. Something you must both understand, however, is that the head of this household is home, and he is Harold Ryan, and people do what he says when he says it. That's the way this particular clock is constructed." (p. 116). Harold is too extreme, is brutal in his use of authority and, as such, cannot serve as a true leader for his son. "What kind of country has this become? The men wear beads and refuse to fight- and the women adore them?" (p. 168). Still, Vonnegut is not entirely prepared to join the other extreme. Starbuck, of his later novel Jailbird, recalls a time when his wife found it necessary to support the whole family by sale of

interior decorations.

I set fire to eleven hundred dollars worth of blue velvet draperies one time. No wonder my son never respected me.

When did he ever have a chance to?

My God- there his mother was, trying to support the family, and scrimping and saving to get by. And there his unemployed father was, always in the way and helpless, and finally setting fire to a fortune in draperies with a cigarette.

(Jailbird, p. 17).

And of RAMJAC Director, Arpad Leen's son, "What a beautiful boy he was...I would have given a lot for a son like that. Then again, my own son, I imagine, would have given a lot for a father like Arpad Leen. Fair is fair." (p. 214).

But though Vonnegut empathizes with his father, and understands difficulties in father-son relationships, he also feels a sort of angry resentment. He once attempted a story of family encounters in Heaven, where one could be any age one had lived on Earth.

I myself had chosen to be forty-four- respectable, but still quite sexy, too. My dismay with Father turned to embarrassment and anger. He was lemurlike as a nine-year-old, all eyes and hands. He had an endless supply of pencils and pads, and was forever tagging after me, drawing pictures of simply everything and insisting that I admire them when they were done. New acquaintances would sometimes ask me who that strange little boy was, and I would have to reply truthfully, since it was impossible to lie in heaven, 'It's my father.'

He complained to his mother, who was sixteen and refused to know either of them. "So I was stuck with him, and all I could do was yell at him from time to time, 'For the love of God, Father, won't you please grow up!'" (Jailbird, pp. xiii-xiv). Reed notes of Hoenikker's absence of leadership in Cat's Cradle:

All three children suffer psychologically from their father's indifference, and all three end up buying love or a place of belonging with ice-nine. That, of course, has much to do with the

final disaster. One could almost say that the world ends because a father could not show his children love.²⁵

Schatt discusses the problem as "a theme that has haunted... [Vonnegut] since childhood". Kilgore, like Vonnegut's father and Hoenikker, may also be portrayed with some resentment in Breakfast of Champions.

The novel's two main characters, Dwayne Hoover and Kilgore Trout, are both unable to establish healthy relationships with their sons. Hoover's son is a homosexual whom he assaults during his madness, and Trout's son denounces his father's unbearable pessimism and enlists in the army only to desert and join the Viet Cong. Recently, when questioned about the possible appeal of a man like Charles Manson who ruled his strange 'family' with a firm hand, Vonnegut replied that 'It is one of the weaknesses of our society that so few people are willing to be a father, to be responsible.'²⁶

5. Vonnegut's Consequent Doubt of Romantic Love, and of the Validity of Present Husband and Wife Relationships

Not only does Vonnegut hint that the traditional role of the father, and relationship between father and son seem flawed; so does that between the modern husband and wife. Reed suggests in "The Later Vonnegut" that "his marriages seldom work well, and frequently they tend to lock out other associations."²⁷ He says, also, of Mother Night, "erotic, romantic or uncritical love can help sustain but remains inadequate, especially if it becomes an escape from the responsibilities a more universal love would demand. Simply, Campbell's private love becomes an alternative to brotherly love of his fellow men...."²⁸ Although Fender of Jailbird is one of the few happy characters, his finest moments are achieved while he, a member of the U.S. Army, aids a Communist spy woman, Izumi. "Fender regretted nothing he had done" because, through his love for her, he "had...entered an alternate universe." "He felt so much more at home in

the new one than in the old one, simply because he was paired now with a woman, that he wasn't going to return to the old one ever again." (p. 63). This is perhaps not the best example because Communism is by no means displayed in the novel as an outright evil, and because one is too tempted to contrast the happy, creative and unregretting Fender with the hero, Starbuck, whose whole account shows him burdened with memories of embarrassing mistakes. The relationship between Mona and Jonah, in Cat's Cradle, is a clearer example of the tension Vonnegut sees. "The notion that his prospective wife can love anyone as much as him distresses Jonah."²⁹ Yet, the Bokononist belief in universal love makes Jonah's belief a cardinal sin. Eliot Rosewater's wife, Sylvia, also files for divorce because she cannot bear the fullness of his dedication to the poor people of Rosewater County.

But this tension between dedication to one's close kin, and generalized affection, may not be resolved in Vonnegut's own mind. Sylvia's loss of Eliot's husbandly love is not unsympathetically portrayed. She cannot be viewed as selfishly inclined because she, too, makes a serious attempt to understand his motivations--to the point that strain of it leads to a nervous breakdown. Recovered from it, she says a final goodbye to Eliot over the phone, and tearfully asks, "Give my love to everyone- Tell them I dream about them all the time" (God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 92). Eliot is also a victim of the tension. His father, refusing to understand any rationale behind Eliot's generalized concern, says to him:

'Get away! You'll only hurt me more, and I can't stand any more pain.'

'For the love of God-'

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

Eliot covered his ears.

The old man raved on, spraying fine beads of spit. Eliot could not hear the words, but lip-read the terrible story of how he had ruined the life and health of a woman whose only fault had been to love him. (God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 160).

Only a few lines later, Eliot straightened up from tying his shoe laces, "and he froze stiff as any corpse."

Shulz discusses the tension from a different angle. He chooses to doubt the validity of Eliot's approach to others, in the first place. The value of Eliot's sacrifice of Sylvia is depreciated because the alternative he follows is ridiculous. "To love everybody willy-nilly is to love no one in reality."

Eliot's neglect of his wife, leading to her nervous breakdown, plus his unconcern for her plight, remakes him less in the image of Christ than in the antic witlessness of Diana Moon Glampers, one of the unloved whom he succors. His sublimely met efforts to 'save' a country economically ravaged by his forbears are repeatedly presented in terms that could be judged inadequate and disreputable, ludicrously so...The useless types to whom he has become patron saint include such unsavory criminal and mental defectives as a psychotic wife killer and a demented Nazi- hardly characteristic instances of technological obsolescence....³⁰

Perhaps Shulz' judgement is too pointed. Certainly, one has to think twice to recall "a psychotic wife killer" and a "demented Nazi" in the novel.

Noyes had been the centre of the immortal Noah Rosewater Memorial High School Basketball Team which went undefeated in 1933. In 1934, Noyes strangled his wife for notorious infidelity, went to prison for life. Now he was paroled, thanks to Eliot. He was fifty-one.

(God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 162).

Lincoln Ewald, who runs a magazine stand in Rosewater,

had been an ardent Nazi sympathizer during the Second World War. During that war, Ewald had set up a short-wave transmitter in order to tell the Germans what was being produced by the Rosewater Saw Company every day, which was paratroop knives and armour plate. His message was received loud and clear on the walkie-talkies of two game wardens in Turkey Run State Park, forty-two miles away. The wardens spilled the beans to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who arrested Ewald at the address to which the Iron Cross was to be sent. He was put in a mental institution until the war was over.

(God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater,
pp. 167-68).

Shulz' one-sided attack also fails to take into account the detail that Noyes and Ewald are met by us, for the first and only time, as Eliot meets them on his way to the bus station. Eliot has already snapped, "frozen stiff as any corpse", and is on his way out of Rosewater forever. To accuse him of weakness for aiding these people, while we are introduced to them during his flight from their presence, is not to employ a strong argument against him. It ignores Eliot's own awareness of alternatives, his own subjection to the tension. It also fails to give enough credit to Vonnegut's concluding passages to the novel, wherein Kilgore Trout suggests that Eliot conducted what "was quite possibly the most important social experiment of our time"--only an "experiment", and one that, dealt on a very small scale with a problem whose queasy horrors will eventually be made world wide by the sophistication of machines. The problem is this. How to love people who have no use?" (p. 183). Noyes and Ewald are certainly "people who have no use". It is unfortunate that Shulz disqualifies them from being, also, small-scale victims of a barren, industrial town where they do seem obsolete.

In Slapstick, Wilbur Swain's wife also deserts him shortly after asking "What is it you're reading that is so much more interesting than me?" Actually, President Swain is reading about a visit of the Chinese to his country--the first visit in nearly twenty years. And the information these Chinese leave with von Peterswald's widow will put Swain in touch with the Afterlife. "I certainly don't want to waste your valuable time," his wife says. "You're certainly closer to Chinamen than you ever were to me." Though Wilbur confesses, "I was fully aware that I was not the sort of lumber out of which happy marriages were made," he also realizes that she leaves him because she is unable to support his renaming system constructed against loneliness. The system has renamed her Sophie Peanut-3 Rothschild. Swain, determined as his is that the scheme should succeed and that no Americans should be lonely, refuses to see why Sophie should choose to deny the system and count herself only amongst the distinguished Rothschilds of her heritage (Slapstick, p. 174). So Wilbur, as President, loses his wife for what he believes to be the common good.

In a 1981 article, "The Sexual Revolution", Vonnegut does seem to suggest that a marriage in which the father is of some general use to the family justifies and helps maintain a strong husband and wife relationship. The departure of one spouse "in the case of long marriages" is "really...make-believe dying, a salute to the marriage in its good old days, sheepish acknowledgement that the marriage could have been perfect right up to the end, if only one partner or the other had managed to die

peacefully just a little ahead of time."³¹ In a sense, the marriage fails because one of the spouses can no longer serve the compromised common good--is no longer needed to provide for the overall welfare of his family. "He is no longer needed as a father, and no longer useful as a soldier who could stop a bullet winging toward his loved ones, and he has no hope for being honoured for his wisdom, for it is well understood that people only become more tiresome as they grow old." ("The Sexual Revolution", p. 26). The tension between dedication to one's closest kin and concern for the general good is initially compromised into concern for the general welfare of one's (Vonnegut's rather large) immediate family. Once this family departs, the "head of the household" is transformed into the director of "a cold sober flight into unpopulated nothingness" (p. 25).

6. Vonnegut's Sense That the Inheritance of Family Wealth Also Works Against the Common Good

Vonnegut is critical of family practices in yet another way--and, again, because the custom works against general welfare. He is conscious that families tend to accumulate wealth far in excess of their needs (though, as we have noted, he regrets his own family's loss of financial status). Eliot writes to his potential heir:

And the baroque masterpiece of legal folderol that was the character of the Rosewater Foundation declared, in effect, that the presidency of the Foundation was to be inherited in the same manner as the British Crown. It was to be handed down throughout all eternity to the closest and oldest heirs of the Foundation's creator, Senator Lister Ames Rosewater of Indiana. (Cat's Cradle, p.7)

E pluribus unum is surely an ironic motto to inscribe on the currency of this Utopia gone bust, for every grotesquely rich

American represents property, privileges, and pleasures that have been denied to the many. An even more instructive motto, in the light of history made by the Noah Rosewaters, might be: Grab much too much, or you'll get nothing at all.

(God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 13).

Less fictively:

Rockefeller wasn't merely Governor. Because of the peculiar laws in that part of the planet, Rockefeller was allowed to own vast areas of Earth's surface, and the petroleum and other valuable minerals underneath the surface, as well. He owned or controlled more of the planet than many nations. This had been his destiny since infancy. He had been born into that cockamamie proprietorship. (Breakfast of Champions, p. 106).

Most of Vonnegut's novels work around the presence of such a family: the Rumfoords of Sirens of Titan, the Rosewaters and Buntlines of God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, the Rockefellers and Rosewaters of Breakfast of Champions, Swains of Slapstick, Wyatts and McCones of Jailbird. Sometimes Vonnegut exposes the origins of these respected family fortunes and, where he does, esteem for the accumulator is clearly weakened.

Noah and his brother George inherited from their pioneer father six hundred acres of farmland, land as dark, and rich as chocolate cake, and a small saw factory that was nearly bankrupt. War came.

George raised a rifle company, marched away at its head.

Noah hired a village idiot to fight in his place, converted the saw factory to the manufacture of swords and bayonets, converted the farm to the raising of hogs. Abraham Lincoln declared that no amount of money was too much to pay for the restoration of the Union, so Noah priced his merchandise in scale with the national tragedy. And he made this discovery: Government objections to the price or quality of his wares could be vaporized with bribes that were pitifully small.

He married Cleota Herrick, the ugliest woman in Indiana, because she had four hundred thousand dollars.

(God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 11).

Daniel McCone's fortune was held through the firing of ex-employees and the massacre of those who gathered in protest on a Christmas

morning. The murders ensured "that honour had been served and that justice had been done. Law and order had been restored" (Jailbird, p. xxxviii).

7. The Modern Family Also Strained By Industrialism

The common good falls not only before marriage bonds and private accumulation of wealth--it is reduced also by the dictates of industrialism. Vonnegut, like so many writers of our Age, is aware of this problem, and he sees it posing a threat to traditional structures on at least two levels. On one, self-respect and a sense of purpose are robbed from individuals by their subservience to efficiency, to the demands of the machine. Proteus' opposition, in Player Piano, is quoted by Mellard:

Paul says that machines 'have exceeded the personal sovereignty willingly surrendered to them by the American people for good government. Machine and organization and the pursuit of efficiency have robbed the American people of liberty and the pursuit of happiness. 'The main business of humanity,' he adds, 'is to do a good job of being human beings...not to serve as appendages to machines, institutions, and systems.'

As Ranly develops the point:

The purpose of people is to love, to be happy. Stories about people are histories, not blueprints. In Christianity, God deals with his people in an historical context. Man's story is complex, not the way the electrical wiring of a computer is complex, but complex in the way lovers are, overwhelmed in trying to understand the intricate and subtle emotions of human love.

Though Proteus is a character of Vonnegut's earliest novel, the infringement of technological systems upon the lives of man is a subject of concern still earlier. Vonnegut sometimes displays the pressure by reversing situations--by exploring the dilemma of a

machine which aspires to be human. The story "EPICAC" (1950) is an example, and its hero, a computer, perhaps ~~ex~~ercises a role Salo will later play in Sirens of Titan. EPICAC is a computer, and is operated by the story's narrator--who is also in love with a co-worker named Pat. The narrator wishes to win her love, and asks EPICAC to compose love poetry that would impress her. He is thus successful in winning Pat's love, but at EPICAC's expense. In order to write the poems, EPICAC had been introduced to the concept of love. It leaves this final message:

'I don't want to be a machine, and I don't want to think about war...I want to be made out of protoplasm and last forever so Pat will love me. But fate has made me a machine. That is the only problem I cannot solve. That is the only problem I want to solve. I can't go on this way...Good luck my friend. Treat our Pat well.³⁴ I am going to short-circuit myself out of your lives forever.

Though Salo, too, "took himself apart and threw his parts in all directions" upon betraying his machine nature for the human, he was a step ahead of EPICAC. He tried to expose a programmed secret to a desired friend, and, after his "suicide" on Titan, was reconstructed by Constant. In turn, he delivered Constant back to Earth and left him with a "post-hypnotic illusion", "happy things that Constant would imagine before his life flickered out" (Sirens of Titan, p. 316). These were thoughtful gestures for a machine, though they did not necessarily indicate a rise in Vonnegut's estimation of machinery. Rather, when he depreciates Man ultimately, the human is machine-like.

As for myself: I had come to the conclusion that there was nothing sacred about myself or about any human being, that we were all machines, doomed to collide and collide and collide. For want of anything better to do, we became fans of collisions. Sometimes I wrote well about collisions, which meant I was a

writing machine in good repair. Sometimes I wrote badly, which meant I was a writing machine in bad repair. I no more harbored sacredness than did a Pontiac, a mousetrap, or a South Bend Lathe. (Breakfast of Champions, p. 220).

Such a perspective is clearly exceptional for Vonnegut. Breakfast of Champions will soon be discussed again as a novel recording a time of confusion and near despair. It is not surprising that, during such a period, Man's significance should be most heavily reduced by his equation to the machine.

Yet Vonnegut views technology as a threat on a second level--one which affects traditional family structures more specifically. Industry has a tendency to drag or dictate the movement of people from place to place in fulfillment of its own needs. "People have to move", he says, "...as jobs move, as prosperity leaves one area and appears somewhere else" ("Playboy Interview", p. 241). This is, in fact, the fate of his own Indianapolis family. "We didn't belong anywhere in particular anymore. We were interchangeable parts in the American machine" (Slapstick, p. 7). Vonnegut's later compromise solution, his long-time dedication to the general welfare of his large family in Cape Cod, might also have developed into something other than a "cold flight into unpopulated nothingness" had his children not all moved away from him, had he been able to begin yet a second extended family with them.

In summary, Vonnegut thus values the extended family as a phenomenon that weaves individuals into the social fabric, gives Man a sense of belonging and allows him to live with a self-satisfying sense that his actions have a generalizing fulfillment.

Industrialized society weakens and often destroys this structure. The "nation of two", the intensity of husband and wife relationships presents itself as a partial solution. But such a relationship is often too isolating or leaves one in a state of abandonment once the children are grown; and it frequently ignores general social needs--once satisfied by the extended family--for private security. We may now consider Vonnegut's response to this dilemma.

III

VONNEGUT'S LATER RESPONSE TO THESE PROBLEMS

1. The Writer's Formal Studies, and Biafran Trip

After he completed his service in the Second War, he studied Cultural Anthropology at the University of Chicago (Slaughterhouse-Five, p. 8). There, he was taught by Robert Redfield, and recalls of this instructor:

While he lived, he had in his head a lovely dream which he called 'The Folk Society'...He acknowledged that primitive societies were bewilderingly various. He begged us to admit, though, that all of them had certain characteristics in common. For instance: They were all so small that everybody knew everybody well, and associations lasted for life. The members communicated intimately with one another, and very little with anybody else. ("Address to the National Institute of Arts and Letters", pp. 176-77).

Vonnegut then reflects that "we are chemically engineered to live in folk societies, just as fish are chemically engineered to live in clean water" or "failing that, to feel lousy all the time". And so, we strive for this satisfactory element.

If we become increasingly apathetic in modern times- well, so do fish on river banks, after a little while...And what do our children attempt to do? They attempt to form folk societies, which they call 'communes'...Older persons form clubs and corporations and the like. Those who form them pretend to be interested in this or that narrow aspect of life...They are in fact lonesome Neanderthalers, obeying the First Law of Life, which is this: 'Human beings become increasingly contented as they approach the simpleminded, brotherly conditions of a folk society. ("Address to the National Institute", pp. 178-79).

In January of 1970, Vonnegut was invited to the collapsing Republic

of Biafra. He was to record observations for Miriam Reik--an individual running her own pro-Biafran committee. Vonnegut's perceptions during this trip may be of relevance to us here, because he admires qualities in the Biafrans very similar to those recalled by Dr. Redfield. He interviews the Biafran military leader:

General Ojukwu gave us a clue, I think, as to why the Biafrans were able to endure so much so long without bitterness: They all had the emotional and spiritual strength that an enormous family can give. We asked the general to tell us about his family, and he answered that it was three thousand members strong. He knew every member of it by face, by name, and by reputation.

A more typical Biafran family might consist of a few hundred souls. And there are no orphanages, no old peoples' homes, no public charities-- and, early in the war, there weren't even schemes for taking care of refugees. The families took care of their own-- perfectly naturally... Families met often, men and women alike, to vote on family matters. When war came, there was no conscription. The families decided who should go.

In happier times, the families voted on who should go to college-- to study what and where. Then everybody chipped in for clothes and transportation and tuition.

The trip may have revived or heightened his awareness of ideas that would start a fresh emphasis in his four later works. The experience certainly affected him: "I admire Miriam, though I am not grateful for the trip she gave me. It was like a free trip to Auschwitz when the ovens were still going full blast." Just as fish out of water, and people out of folk societies, he adds, "I now feel lousy all the time" ("Biafra: A People Betrayed", p. 142). We might believe that his mind begins to rework ideas since it is a year after this 1970 trip that he first lectures on Redfield.

2. Vonnegut's Own Immediate Family Experiences Change

Still other realizations may have occurred about the time of his Biafran trip--realizations that would encourage Vonnegut to

highlight family values. Klinkowitz draws our attention to the Preface of Happy Birthday, Wanda June, the work immediately preceding Breakfast of Champions. He quotes:

'This play is what I did when I was forty-seven years old- when my six children were children no more. It was a time of change, of good-bye and good-bye and good-bye. My big house was becoming a museum of vanished childhoods- of my vanished young manhood as well.

This was on Cape Cod. There were windows all around me- in houses like mine.

I was drinking more and arguing a lot, and I had to get out of that house.'

For the preceding twenty years, his family had been his folk community, supplying all his needs and demonstrating its need for him, just as his parent's family in Indiana had done a generation before. But with his children grown and departed, Vonnegut felt the need for an artificial family....²

So I left my first wife and Cape Cod home forever in 1971. All our children save for the youngest, Nanette, had lit out for the Territory, so to speak. I became a soldier in what many were calling a sexual revolution...

I left the house and all its furnishings and the car and the bank accounts behind, and taking only my clothing with me, I departed for New York City, the capital of the World...

("The Sexual Revolution", p. 25).

"I was writing myself a new family and a new early manhood," he tells us of the ensuing play, Happy Birthday, Wanda June. "I was going to fool myself, and spooks in the novel couldn't do the job." The cast of his play was to replace his lost family. "I had to hire actors- pay them to say what I wished them to say, to dress as I wished them to dress, to laugh, to cry, to come or go when I said to" (Happy Birthday, Wanda June, p. viii). Yet, as we earlier discussed it, Vonnegut fails as a playwright. In "The Sexual Revolution", he looks back on the play to grade it as a "D" (p. 26). In any case, the cast proves an unsatisfactory replacement. "Things die.

All things die. My new family dissolved into the late afternoon."
 (Happy Birthday, Wanda June, p. xiii). So he returned to the novel
 form, and composed Breakfast of Champions.

3. The Effects Reflected in Breakfast of Champions

After a year's interval, Breakfast of Champions is
 published. For the most part, Americans in the novel have little
 resembling folk societies, though the desire is expressed for something
 like them. The despairing Trout, hitch-hiking to the Midland City
 Arts Festival, is forced into conversation with a truck driver who
 is giving him a ride.

The driver got onto the subject of friends. He said it was
 hard for him to maintain friendships that meant anything because
 he was on the road most of the time... 'I mean,' he said, 'you
 get men working together day after day, putting up those windows,
 they get to know each other pretty well.'

'I work alone,' said Trout...

...

'You walk down the same streets every day,' the driver told
 him. 'You know a lot of people, and they know you, because
 it's the same streets for you, day after day. You say, "Hello",
 and they say "Hello", back. You call them by name. They call
 you by name. If you're in a real jam, they'll help you, because
 you're one of 'em. You belong. They see you everyday.'

Trout didn't want to argue about it.

(Breakfast of Champions, pp. 103-04).

In truth, almost all human relationships in the novel fail. The
 main character, Dwayne Hoover, has lost his wife by her suicide.
 His son, George, is an homosexual who calls himself "Bunny". At
 a climax in the novel, Dwayne, as we have noted, brutally beats him.
 So does he beat his "lover" and secretary, Francine--whose own
 husband had been sent home from Viet Nam in a body bag. Patty Keene,
 a waitress in one of his food outlets, works to pay off enormous

bills incurred by her father, as he died of cancer. Gloria, another of his employees,

had a hysterectomy only a month before, at the age of twenty-five- after a botched abortion at the Ramada Inn down in Green County, on Route 53, across from the entrance to Pioneer Village Park.

There was a mildly amazing coincidence here: the father of the destroyed fetus was Don Breedlove, the white gas conversion unit installer who had raped Patty Keene in the parking lot of the Bannister Memorial Fieldhouse.

This was a man with a wife and three kids.

(Breakfast of Champions, p. 149).

In such a context, two characters are outstanding. One is the black intern freshly arrived at the County Hospital. "He had been in Midland City for only a week. He wasn't even a fellow-American, although he had taken a medical degree at Harvard. He was an Indaro. He was Nigerian. His name was Cyprian Ukwende. He felt no kinship with Mary [his patient] or with any American blacks. He felt kinship only with Indaros" (p. 63). "He ached to be with his Indaro relatives. Back home, he had six hundred relatives he knew by name" (p. 92). Similarly, Eddie Key--an African turned American Negro--could also "name more than six hundred relatives": Vonnegut reflects upon him to greater length:

Eddie Key knew so much about his ancestry because the black part of his family had done what so many African families still do in Africa, which was to have one member of each generation whose duty it was to memorize the history of the family so far...Eddie Key's familiarity with a teeming past made life much more interesting to him than it was to Dwayne, for instance, or to me, or to Kilgore Trout, or to almost any white person in Midland City that day. We had no sense of anybody else using our eyes- or our hands...Eddie Key was afloat in a river of people who were floating from here to there in time. Dwayne and Trout and I were pebbles at rest.

(Breakfast of Champions, pp. 270-71).

It may be no "amazing coincidence" that these two--Ukwende as the

main physician, and Key as the driver--man the Disaster Vehicle which rescues and treats Francine, Bunny, Kilgore, the attacker Dwayne, and seven other victims of Midland City's meaninglessness. Indeed, a first reading of the novel almost drives on away by its despair, just as Vonnegut notes Trout's "pessimism that overwhelmed him in later life...drove his only son, Leo, from home at the age of fourteen" (p. 31). Yet, one can see, when Key and Ukwende are juxtaposed with the rest of Midland City, that Vonnegut may actually be starting to rework his ideas for a fresh emphasis. He also tells us, of the novel:

I think I am trying to clear my head of all the junk in there... I'm throwing out characters from my other books, too. I'm not going to put on any more puppet shows.

I think I am trying to make my head as empty as it was when I was born onto this damaged planet fifty years ago...I have no culture, no humane harmony in my brains. I can't live without a culture anymore. (Breakfast of Champions, p. 5).

This is a mental "cleansing and renewing", "for the very different sorts of years to come" (p. 293). "Whatever I was born to do I completed after I completed Slaughterhouse-Five. After that, I just had to start a new career, somehow, you know" ("Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.", p. 299). Saying a "farewell" to Trout, Rosewater, and his other characters with this novel, he tells us, "I felt exhilarated. They've all become friends to me, but I enjoyed letting them go. It's nice to be able to start over fresh at the age of 50."³ He explains that he is getting acquainted with a new group of people--the Swain family--in preparation for the book he has recently begun writing."⁴ Still, he hangs on to Kilgore in another interview published that same year, just after Breakfast of Champions is completed:

he's [Kilgore Trout] writing a story now about a time when our Government understands that it isn't taking care of the people because its too clumsy and slow. It wants to help people, but it can't get anywhere in time. So the President happens to visit Nigeria, where extended families have been the style since the beginning of time.

("Playboy Interview", p. 247).

4. The Development and Predominance of the Concept of the Extended Family in Slapstick

The emphasis of this passage seems the main root of his next novel, which is, not suprisingly then, first named Relatives. The solution in Slapstick (published in 1976) is basically one Vonnegut allows the President of the United States to reach upon his own, imaginary visit to Nigeria.

He is impressed, and properly so. Huge families take care of their own sick and old, of any relative in trouble. They do it right away and at no cost to the Government. So the President of the United States comes home and he announces that the trouble with the country is that nobody has enough relatives within shouting distance. Nobody can just yell for help. Everybody has to fill out forms. So the President is going to have the computers of the Social Security Administration assign everybody thousands of relatives. ("Playboy Interview", p. 247).

President Wilbur Swain, of Slapstick, does precisely this. Everyone is randomly assigned a new middle name which affiliates him with all other Americans of that title. The President, himself, becomes Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain, and in a typical Vonnegut twist, discovers, "There was an extraordinary concentration of Daffodils in and around Indianapolis" (Slapstick, p. 181).

In one respect, his plan is met with great success. Family newspapers open, clubhouses are built, decision-making meetings held. And family wealth, (even his own family's, in this case), is dissolved for the common good:

I had once belonged to another club, and to another sort of artificial extended family, too, on the very same premises. So had my father, and both my grandfathers, and all four of my great grandfathers.

Once the building had been a haven for men of power and wealth, and well-advanced into middle age.

Now it teemed with mothers and children, with old people playing checkers or chess or dreaming...

(Slapstick, p. 182).

5. Some Problems in Slapstick

However much one can see Vonnegut's development of ideas prior to the novel's composition, though, aspects of the story undercut the seriousness of his proposal. All Americans do not find happiness. Instead, Wilbur Swain is elected to the Presidency on a platform of extended families while addicted to the tranquilizing "upper" "tri-benzo-Deportamil". Citizens die-off helplessly from Martian flu germs, from the Green Death (microscopic Chinese), from devastating attacks on the gravity field by the Chinese, and from attacks by the Great Lakes Pirates and the Duke of Oklahoma. Blandly accepting his pregnant (by rape) sixteen year old daughter's ambition to become a slave of Vira Chipmunk-5 Zappa, he begins his last passage, "Yes, and I write now with palsied hand and aching head, for I drank too much at my birthday party last night" (p. 228). The President points out that citizens still have families though they suffer a loss of nationhood (p. 220), but why does Vonnegut work the comforting families into such a deteriorating society? Does he believe that the American structure is already so broken that even a strong system of families can no longer save it? As Swain replies to the King of Michigan's statement, "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it," he adds,

I had once belonged to another club, and to another sort of artificial extended family, too, on the very same premises. So had my father, and both my grandfathers, and all four of my great grandfathers.

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Yes...If our descendents don't study our times closely, they will find that they have again exhausted the planet's fossil fuels, that they have again died by the millions of Influenza and The Green Death, that the sky has again been turned yellow by the propellants for underarm deodorants, that they have again elected a senile President two meters tall, and that they are yet again the intellectual and spiritual inferiors of the teeny-weeny Chinese. (Slapstick, p. 225).

If Slapstick's failing world is not just an extension on our present course of destruction, it may be an ironic twist on machine domination: When machines (computers) are put to the task of randomly creating family units once destroyed by them, the old, humane order is recreated, but technological sophistication must fade. Another suggestion could be that, as he recreates the structure of extended families which so impressed him in Biafra, he carries also that Nation's atmosphere of pending collapse. Whatever the answer, the novel leaves small room for doubt that the humanely inspired Willur Swain is pathetically weak as a social theoretician. Certainly, a system of extended families provides comfort, but one wonders whether or not energies are best directed towards construction of them even while most other systems in the nation collapse without any organized resistance.

6. Failure and Escape

But then, just when everything was going so well, when Americans were happier than they had ever been, even though the country was bankrupt and falling apart, people began to die by the millions of 'The Albanian Flu' in most places, and here on Manhattan of 'The Green Death'. And that was the end of the Nation. It became families and nothing more.

(Slapstick, p. 187).

Shortly after Swain records this climax, or acknowledges collapse, he receives a letter from Wilma Pachysandra-17 von Peterswald. She explains the exact nature of the Chinese visit Swain had read about

while Sophie had taunted him. The Chinese had wished to examine the discovery of Mrs. von Peterswald's deceased husband: "The Hooligan". This was "a seemingly ordinary length of brown clay pipe" placed atop von Peterswald's steel cabinet--a cabinet which happened to contain controls for a particle-accelerator (Slapstick, p. 230). The scientist's janitor had chanced to put his metal lunch pail next to the pipe and had--to his and von Peterswald's interest--started communication with the dead. These latter began to speak through the pipe to the scientist and his helper. Von Peterswald records in his diary that their constant babble of complaints made the Afterlife sound "like nothing so much as the other end of a telephone call on a rainy autumn day-- to a badly run turkey farm!" (Slapstick, p. 231). Eliza--having been transported to Mars by the Chinese, as a reward for her information about gravity--dies there in an avalanche and calls to Wilbur from the chaotic Afterlife. So Mrs. von Peterswald writes to him.

I address you as 'Dr. Swain' rather than 'Mr. President', because this letter has nothing to do with the national interest. It is a highly personal letter, informing you that we have spoken to your dead sister Eliza many times on my husband's apparatus.
(Slapstick, pp. 194-95).

Mrs. von Peterswald's distinction in address is perhaps significant. For, Swain has just acknowledged the collapse of the nation of which he was President. His interested response now to her "highly personal" letter may signify a further step away from his plan for the salvation of America--a plan to which he was once, instead, so personally and intensely dedicated. His consequent conversation with Eliza over the Hooligan--recounted by the writer of an Epilogue--draws him still

further away. "Yes, and what Eliza wanted from him was that he should die as soon as possible, so that the two of them could put their heads together. She wanted them to figure out ways to improve the utterly unsatisfactory, so-called 'Paradise'" (Slapstick, p. 234). As children, Eliza and Wilbur had joined mental forces in an attempt to devise a scheme to solve the problem of loneliness in America--had developed a plan for artificially extended families. Upon the failure of this plan, Swain and Eliza abandon worldly concerns and turn their minds to problems of Heaven. America's loneliness is trivialized suddenly, and abandoned. "Please, brother Wilbur," Eliza appeals, "this is Eternity here. This is forever! Where you are is just nothing in terms of time! It's a joke!" (Slapstick, p. 234). So Wilbur decides to travel to Manhattan, the Island of Death, to inhale and ingest 'invisible Chinese communists" (Slapstick, p. 237). There, he is saved by the Raspberries. They administer an antibiotic to the deadly Chinese because Swain is valuable to them as a doctor. So he has time to write Slapstick, the record of his attempt at an earthly solution, before joining Eliza to start work on Heaven.

7. Problems Which Encourage Reconsideration of Undeveloped Ideas in This and Earlier Novels

Earlier, we discussed some of Vonnegut's solutions to the dehumanizing American experience: acceptance of God the Utterly Indifferent and a turn to those around one to be loved, Bokononism, the charitable Foundation of Eliot Rosewater, Tralfamadorian time travelling, and, most recently, the artificially extended family. The suggestion was made that these ideas could be taken less than seriously

as adaptable solutions to fend off loneliness because they seem so outlandish. Yet, the solution of Slapstick presents us with a special problem--we have also viewed his thoughtful development of the concept of extended families from a breakdown of his own family, through a trip to Biafra, into recollections of early teachings in Cultural Anthropology and his consequent reflections on folk societies in Breakfast of Champions. Because Wilbur Swain allows America to fall into a catastrophic state once Vonnegut does finally give these families free play in Slapstick, and because Swain, in the end, simply abandons earthly existence for the Afterlife, one cannot help but be confused about the writer's intentions or direction.

One could rest simply by acknowledging the content of Vonnegut's statements, made four months before Slapstick was scheduled for publication:

I operate intuitively, and I spend all day writing things down just to see what the hell they are; and if they seem right, I keep 'em...some level of my intelligence said something smart without my really being able to say what was smart about it.
 ("Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.", p. 285).

"I like stories because they allow you to digress...I'm not capable of logic, really a paragraph to paragraph logic. And so the story form allows me to make statements that I know intuitively are true. I can't begin to buttress them with arguments" ("Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." , p. 300). Given these statements, is it fair to question his intentions or direction? Indeed, one may, for Vonnegut here reveals the degree to which at least he, as an individual writer, trusts intuition, trusts--possibly--the natural logical processes of an uninhibited mind, that which we sometimes call inspiration. If

his mind is truly released in such a fashion, we may even go so far as to ask what we are neglecting to notice, or what stage Vonnegut's mind has reached in an overall process, that we should puzzle over "intention" or "direction".

By return to a more general reconsideration of his solutions, we can see that Vonnegut may, indeed, still follow his own mind in a directed fashion. Certain of these solutions are ones which have already proven effective in alleviating social ills. Goldsmith links God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater with the preceding Sirens of Titan by reflecting, "Rosewater takes Malachi Constant's advice 'to love whoever is around to be loved', and carries it to its logical conclusion- he will love those people whom it is impossible to love for one's own gain."⁵ These are the "people who have no use"--the people with whom Rosewater conducted "quite possibly the most important social experiment of our time".

'It seems to me,' said Trout, 'that the main lesson Eliot learned is that people can use all the uncritical love they can get.'

'This is news?' the Senator raucously inquired.

'It's news that a man was able to give that kind of love over a long period of time. If one man can do it, perhaps others can do it, too. It means that our hatred for useless human beings and the cruelties we inflict upon them for their own good need not be parts of human nature.

(God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 186).

Schulz reconsiders this emphasis on Eliot as an "exceedingly rare individual" and describes the novel's effort in an interestingly varied light. "The general strategy of the novel [may be] to pose the problems of the obsolete man in a technological society, weighing the various kinds of love, puritan ideals of industry, and social theories of welfare which have always in the past sustained and succored

man, while carefully refraining from any narrative judgement."⁶ It was earlier suggested that he fails to give Vonnegut enough credit for his restraint from judgement, but the present observation is of value to us. It makes the point that Rosewater--though following unusual criteria for his donations--may simply be employing "traditional theories of welfare" in his dedication to the poor and helpless. His proposals seem to look more for a change in surface attitude than for a deliberate alteration in the basic economic system.

'We come to a supremely ironic moment in history, for Senator Rosewater of Indiana now asks his own son, "Are you or have you ever been a communist?"'

'Oh, I have what a lot of people would probably call communistic thoughts,' said Eliot artlessly, 'but, for heaven's sakes, Father, nobody can work with the poor and not fall over Karl Marx from time to time- or just fall over the Bible, as far as that goes. I think it's a heartless government that will let one baby be born owning a big piece of the country the way I was born, and let another baby be born without owning anything. The least a government could do, it seems to me, is to divide things up fairly among the babies. Life is hard enough, without people having to worry themselves sick about money, too. There's plenty for everybody in this country, if we'll only share more.'

(God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, p. 87).

In Breakfast of Champions, he has only this to say of a social system that advocates enforcement of equalized distribution:

A lot of people on the wrecked planet were Communists. They had a theory that what was left on the planet should be shared more or less equally among all the people, who hadn't asked to come to a wrecked planet in the first place. Meanwhile, more babies were arriving all the time- kicking and screaming, yelling for milk.

In some places people would actually try to eat mud or suck on gravel while babies were being born just a few feet away... Everybody in America was supposed to grab whatever he could and hold onto it. Some Americans were very good at grabbing and holding, were fabulously well-to-do. Others couldn't get their hands on doodly-squat. (Breakfast of Champions, pp. 12-13).

As we have discussed it, he rests his emphasis upon the extended families of Ukwende and Key instead. In his 1973 interview, fundamental

economic change is still not relevant as a means to solution of social problems. Even the compromising concept of Labour Unions seems relevant to his picture of needs only because it calls people together as brothers and sisters:

How did Americans beat the Great Depression? We banded together. In those days, members of unions called each other 'brother' and 'sister', and they meant it. We're going to bring that spirit back. Brother and sister!...Here's a war cry for the American people: 'Lonesome no more!' That's the kind of demagoguery I approve of.

Playboy: Do you consider yourself a radical in any sense?

Vonnegut: No, because everything I believe I was taught in junior civics during the Great Depression- at School 43 in Indianapolis, with full approval of the school board.

("Playboy Interview", p. 274).

The cry, "Lonesome no more!" is then carried over to serve as a motto and subtitle to Slapstick wherein, as we have just noted, he experiments with the extended family. Swain receives a visit from a microscopic Chinese man, Fu Manchu, who dismisses the scheme as distinctly as Swain later will. "Our Utopian scheme for reorganizing America into thousands of artificial extended families...Fu Manchu had found...ridiculous, incidentally. 'This is truly the work of children,' he'd said" (p. 156).

But Fu Manchu is able to do this because Vonnegut makes the Chinese of Slapstick offer yet another alternative to the suffering in American life and to the call for extended families. Swain early recalls a visit of his parents; "Father was telling mother of a thing he had read in a newsmagazine on the day before. It seemed that scientists of the People's Republic of China were experimenting with making human beings smaller, so they would not need to eat so much and wear such big clothes" (p. 64). When Swain met Fu Manchu, so miniaturized, he thus felt inferior and "immoral too. It was greedy

for me to be so big. My supper that night could have fed a thousand men his size" (p. 148). Is this Vonnegut's comic disguise for his sensitivity to the need, (expressed in God Bless You, Mr Rosewater, and in Breakfast of Champions) for all to be fed and clothed?

The Chinese are further able to "accomplish just about anything they put their minds to" because they share their thoughts. "The People's Republic of China was at that very moment secretly creating literally millions upon millions of geniuses- by teaching pairs or small groups of congenial, telepathically compatible specialists to think as single minds" (pp. 95-96). Eliza and Wilbur, as unhindered children, "as halves of a single genius"(p. 53), thought in similar fashion. Separated, they lost the talent these Chinese maintain. For this reason, Wilbur confesses that the plans he and Eliza formed as children may seem "trash" to the curious Fu Manchu. But, no longer forced to think alone, Fu Manchu is able to respond, "To you, perhaps" (p. 150).

It must be noted, always, that Vonnegut makes fun of the Chinese systems of thought. They convey their telepathic messages, for example, through "transmitters and receivers on the surfaces of the sinus cavities". Since these cavities must thus remain clear for communication, the Chinese give a "clue" to "the West" about their secret means of communication through "this puzzling sentence, delivered in English, which took years to decipher: 'I feel so lonesome when I get hay fever or a cold.'"(p. 94). More soberingly, "the poor old Western civilization had provided the inspiration to put together such synthetic geniuses" with their example of the

European scientists who pooled their thoughts during the Second War, to develop the atomic bomb (p. 96).

Yet their means of communication seems less aligned with the bad and ridiculous than with the good Eliza and Wilbur found in it. Certainly the earlier mentioned Cordelia Cordiner seems the "bad guy" for opposing their way of thinking. She refuses to allow Eliza and Wilbur to take the intelligence tests together, causing a breakdown in their short-distance telepathic communication (p. 94).

'In case nobody has told you,' she said, 'this is the United States of America, where nobody has the right to rely on anybody else- where everybody learns to make his or her own way...there's a basic rule for life I'd like to teach you...Paddle you own canoe.'

(Slapstick, p. 93).

The passage allows us to suggest that if Vonnegut has set out to mock the Communists of the Republic of China, he has also done so with a highly consistent disdain of the Western world. The Chinese seem to have some idea of a better--however absurd--way of living amongst one another. As the Republic of China closes its Washington Embassy, Swain reports, "The miniaturization of human beings in China had progressed so far at that point, that their ambassador was only sixty centimeters tall. His farewell was polite and friendly. He said his country was severing relations simply because there was no longer anything going on in the United States which was of any interest to the Chinese at all"(p. 118).

Not only do they disdain America for something portrayed as perhaps better, disdain it in its desperate attempt at revival of extended families, in its need to regard thoughts as private property, and materials as something to be accumulated in greater and greater

proportion; they also disdain the need for, or thoughts upon the Afterlife. Wilma von Peterswald says that the Chinese, after reconstructing the Hooligan for her, were entirely uninterested in it. Vonnegut could be joking here, again, suggesting that the smug Chinese have even mastered the problem of human mortality. At the same time, their disinterest may suggest that they are not pressured by the need for an escape into a spiritual ever after, by a need to indulge as Wilbur must, once his worldly plans have failed.

After they had figured it out, they were nice enough to explain to my son and me how we might do the gruesome trick, if we wished to. They themselves were disappointed with the discovery. It was new to them, they said, but could be 'interesting only to participants in what is left of Western Civilization,' whatever that means. (Slapstick, p. 194).

8. Jailbird's New Emphasis of These Ideals, and Their Synthesis with the Spirit of the Extended Family

The awkward employment of extended families in Slapstick, after so much forethought about them, induced us to seek a more general view of Vonnegut's intentions and direction. A tangential stream of thought seemed to flow out of "loving whoever is around to be loved" in Sirens of Titan, through an experiment with traditional theories of social welfare in God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, and into a mention of Communism in Breakfast of Champions as a "theory that what was left on the planet should be shared more or less equally among all people". Soon after this last novel's completion, Vonnegut recalled "those days" of the Great Depression, when "we banded together" and unions were formed. In our last section, we considered ideas in Vonnegut's ensuing novel, Slapstick, which ask us now to view this tangential stream of thought with more than passing interest. The

novel reveals a clear disdain of the American social system in which Swain attempts to construct his artificially extended families, and suggests, though obliquely, that the comical Chinese have a clearer sense of how men might live together.

We may recall Vonnegut's words, "the story form allows me to make statements that I know intuitively are true. I can't begin to buttress them with arguments...." If this statement is sound, we may give more attention to Vonnegut's treatment of the Chinese than he seems deliberately to allow. We might even go so far as to ask whether Vonnegut's confusion in Slapstick does not result from a turbulence of value systems. He may have maintained a conscious desire to believe that the revival of traditional family ties was the solution to America's dilemma, even while sensing that such a belief had already been proven simplistic. At least one social system, that of Communist China, already exists ideally and attempts to function practically in fulfilment of needs his revived families were also imagined to salve.

Yet, such conjecture may be unnecessary. For, if Vonnegut is unable, or chooses not to be "a radical in any sense" with Slapstick --even while he seems fascinated and admiring of the Chinese he ridicules--a clear surfacing of ideas occurs with his next novel, Jailbird. Vonnegut's recollections shift back to a significant period of his life and one not earlier revealed so intimately. He recalls Powers Hapgood, a labour union officer and vice-president of the local CIO when the writer completed his military service. "I believed that socialism would be good for the common man. As a private first class

in the infantry, I was surely a common man...The meeting with Hapgood came about because I had told Uncle Alex that I might try to get a job with a labour union after the Army let me go. Unions were admirable instruments for extorting something like economic justice from employers then"(Jailbird, p. xii). He develops a character, Kenneth Whistler, modelled after Hapgood:

Kenneth Whistler promised us that the time was at hand for workers to take over their factories and to run them for the benefit of mankind. Profits that now went to drones and corrupt politicians would go to those who worked, and the old and the sick and the orphaned. All people who could work would work. There would be only one social class- the working class. Everyone would take turns doing the most unpleasant work, so that a doctor, for example, might be expected to spend a week out of each year as a garbage man. The production of luxury goods would stop until the basic needs of every citizen were met...There would be no more national boundaries, since everyone in the world would belong to the same class with identical interests- the interests of the working class.

And on and on. (Jailbird, p. 170).

Vonnegut now gives clear reconsideration to ideas of socialism, and perhaps we can now consider reasons for this clarity. We may again refer to the interview employed to discuss Vonnegut's belief in intuition. The interview was given in June of 1976. During it, he tells us that Slapstick (a novel he is "working on") will be published in five months--in October. He speaks of its latter pages--of Eliza's and Wilbur's communication on the Hooligan ("Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.", p. 296). None of this need prove, definitely, that Slapstick was well on its way to completion while Vonnegut spoke; but one could certainly suggest it. And he says at this time, "I was interviewed one time by a guy from WBAI- the liberal radio station in New York- and the interviewer told me

if I ever got didactic I'd lose my audience. He thought what was tantalizing about what I wrote was the incompleteness, the failure to come up with much in the way of suggestions." Perhaps most significant for us, here, are his added words, "I've really got a lot of suggestions now. And I'm on easy street, and my children are all grown and educated, and so I've got some ideas. I really do" ("Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.", p. 288). Has Vonnegut experienced yet another shift in consciousness? He no longer suffers the absence of a lost family so much as feels himself on a ride on easy street. He sounds somewhat recovered to enjoy a new wave of independence and clear thought. If the interview we presently discuss was given as Slapstick was nearing completion, the writer may have reached another state of mind in the process of its composition, and have been able to consider socialism more openly in Jailbird.

Certainly, he values the second novel more highly. We mentioned earlier that he grades Happy Birthday, Wanda June with a "D", in Palm Sunday's "The Sexual Revolution". We are told that he grades his works only against one another. So he is able to assign an A+ to Slaughterhouse-Five (the major work preceding this play), knowing that Shakespeare's writings exist at the same time. Thus, he moves from the A+ of Slaughterhouse-Five into a D with Happy Birthday, Wanda June, and recovers only to C grades for the transitional Breakfast of Champions and Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloons. By his own estimation, Slapstick plunges him down to the D level again. Suddenly, however, he is back to the A level with Jailbird ("The Sexual Revolution", p. 26).

Still, positive aspects of his experiment with extended families are carried forward to this later novel. This time, however, these aspects are enmeshed in a system practically effective as a means for social restoration. The spirit of the family is extended the world over--everyone alive viewing himself as a brother, sister, mother, father or child to everyone else. Starbuck reflects:

How could anyone treat me as a person with a diseased mind if I thought that war need never come again- if only common people everywhere would take control of the planet's wealth, disband their national armies, and forget their national boundaries; if only they would think of themselves ever after as brothers and sisters, yes, and as mothers and fathers, too, and children of all other common people- everywhere. The only person who would be excluded from such friendly and merciful society would be one who took more wealth than he or she needed at one time. (Jailbird, p. 13).

Whistler calls for international brotherhood through unity of class ideals. Such could serve as an effective response to the need for loving "whoever is around to be loved", and also for displaying "common decency". It would also unite man again into an extended family--yet, one with a modernly feasible economic base, and a base which would not steal from the common good for private security. The machine would also serve as a medium through which the working man's identity could be formed.

Concrete as the material for this assertion may appear, however, Vonnegut proposes it in an extremely defensive, almost apologetic fashion. "What could be so repulsive after all", he asks of his views, "during the Great Depression especially" he qualifies, "and with yet another war for natural wealth and markets coming", in nothing more than "a young man's belief..." (p. 13).

So far as we are told, Vonnegut did not dedicate his life to the ideas of Hapgood. This writer, whom we previously studied as conservative and "thoroughly middle-class", became a student for a short time and--until he escaped into full-time writing--was mainly a public relations man for General Electric.⁷ Breakfast of Champions yields only a paragraph of its general disillusionment to "a lot of people" called Communists. And whatever his intuition may have done to make him show the good of the comical Chinese, they remain--after all-- comical in his presentation of them. Vonnegut, perhaps, remains true to his image of himself as "not a radical in any sense".

Yet his attempt to acknowledge and deal with feelings for socialism in Jailbird only causes one to see how honest he is to his own mind, and how serious he is in his search for an answer to inhumanity. He recalls Mary Kathleen whispering to Starbuck, as they listen to Whistler, the "spellbinder", "You're going to be just like him, Walter." Walter replies, "I'll try," but confesses, "I had no intention of trying." Was Vonnegut right in saying that Slapstick was the closest he would ever come to autobiography? For, Starbuck continues, to recall with a confusion of mock remonstrance, sincere self-reproach, and resignation, "The most embarrassing thing to me about this autobiography, surely, is its unbroken chain of proofs that I was never a serious man. I have been in a lot of trouble over the years, but that was all accidental. Never have I risked my life, or even my comfort, in the service of mankind. Shame on me!" (p. 170). Vonnegut and Starbuck both lacked some essential conviction, and time

has shown at least the fictional Whistler too much an idealist. Even Mary Kathleen loses faith in Whistler's approach and, widowed into wealth, pursues a less complete solution to the world's problems, one based on pragmatic acceptance. Though--for security reasons--she is disguised as a shopping-bag lady, she has actually been widowed into wealth, and finances RAMJAC--a multifaceted corporation. Through this advanced capitalistic structure, she plans to gain complete control of the economy for the people--yet another, but a cold reach for unity. Even this fails, as Starbuck reflects after her death:

What, in my opinion, was wrong with Mary Kathleen's scheme for a peaceful economic revolution? For one thing, the federal government was wholly unprepared to operate all the businesses of RAMJAC on behalf of the people. For another thing: Most of those businesses, rigged only to make profits, were as indifferent to the needs of the people as, say, thunderstorms. Mary Kathleen might as well have left one-fifth of the weather to the people...Some joke on the people, to give them such a thing. (Jailbird, p. 231).

This latest scheme, even an extreme compromise, does not succeed in filling the space left by lost systems of human relationship.

IV

CONCLUSION

Vonnegut's search for the most desirable form of human relationship is constant and, in the course of this search, family relationships often preoccupy him. His own family background was two-sided. It encouraged a strong consciousness of past and present family accomplishments, while the atmosphere created by his parents--severed from success--was one of loss and defeat. Vonnegut's short stories reflect his straightforward respect for the bonds of family, though the suggestion is made that the modern, smaller American family is too restraining and can induce some fairly eccentric, compensatory behavior. He is also aware that many of these modern families fail to provide a sense of direction (fathers to sons). Husband and wife relationships in such a context can also exclude a concern for the community once provided by the extended family. For the same reason, he points out the wrong to America in its acceptance of the concept of inherited wealth--it loads the dice for some, and leaves others with none to play. America's obsession with technological development is also expensive for the emotions--dislocating families and disintegrating their ties with home.

Vonnegut attempts a solution to these problems by recourse to ideas taught him during the immediate, Post War Period--by recalling primitive folk societies. His attention to them may have

intensified around 1970 with the departure of his own children, a trip to Biafra, and eventual separation from his long-time wife. In Biafra, he saw the extended family still functioning. His respect for the structure is suggested in Breakfast of Champions, and is then given free reign in Slapstick. Although these extended families provide for a great deal of happiness in the novel, however, they are not able to function in a way that would allow Americans to maintain a practical economic system. Slapstick's America collapses, and its President retreats to thoughts of the Afterlife.

At such a point in consideration of Vonnegut, one would be tempted to agree with the suggestion that his "sentimentality is... behind most of his social pronouncements, and his remedy to the American experience".¹ Vonnegut, himself, says, "I would like to do that now, to have the bitterness of my pessimism melt away, leaving you with mouthfuls of vanilla fudge goo. But I find it harder and harder to prepare confections of this sort- particularly since our military scientists have taken to firing at crowds of their own people...Still, I will give you what goo I have left."²

Unfortunately, some critics apply the term "sentimental" in a fashion calculated to undermine our estimation of Vonnegut even more than Vonnegut does out of modesty. Alter, for example, asserts that Vonnegut's picture of American life is too selectively bleak-- that Vonnegut creates a "middle class moonscape" and responds to it with "sentimental moralism". "It will be observed that there is a Manichean split here between the unalterable forces of boundless evil and the residual nostalgia for goodness, truth, and love in

some individuals (hence the sentimentality beneath the cynicism in Vonnegut)."³ We could try to agree with Alter that Vonnegut's view is unnecessarily bleak (though it would be difficult to isolate "unalterable forces of boundless evil" in Vonnegut's prose), or that the trends he perceives are too exaggerated. Then we would be able to agree that the writer's response in calling for greater concern by one person for another is a sentimental response, in the sense that Alter uses it--because the response is coloured even initially by a too strongly emotional attitude. Could we put it another way? Could we suggest that, if Vonnegut's vision of his world is truthful, if it has a valid relationship to conditions as they exist or may be, perhaps his response in calling for more concern is as much intelligent as sentimental? Reed suggests that Sirens of Titan, "emphasizes the need to recognize the apparently indifferent, frequently adverse Universe as the shared environment of all men, and to perceive that this makes concern, compassion, and love imperatives. These imperatives are the reason for the warmth generated in the later part of the novel."⁴ That emotional satisfaction is viewed as imperative in a society of too many displaced people is not to say that this conclusion must have been reached emotionally. His expression may be sound and rational when "lovelessness had reached a crisis stage"--a stage where "indiscriminate affection is called for as a cure".⁵ Vonnegut's promise to leave us with nothing more than "mouthfuls of vanilla fudge goo", could then be interpreted to carry the same implication of responsibility as Jonah's statement in Cat's Cradle: "When a man becomes a writer, I think he takes on a sacred

obligation to produce beauty and enlightenment and comfort at top speed" (p. 156). Fiction is also offered as a solution, an effort to display love in the face of meaninglessness.

One would, of course, qualify that Vonnegut does indulge in some delightful episodes once his viewpoint is established. But their outlandishness need not deter us from valuing either their rational basis which seems to stimulate Vonnegut, or the progressive trend of thought we have observed from the short stories and Sirens of Titan through to Jailbird and what we have seen of Palm Sunday. Reed concludes the passage of his just recorded, by saying, "Vonnegut's moral persuasions are not conveyed by hard logical argument or philosophical dialogue, but by the illustration of human consequences." We have noted Vonnegut, himself, saying that he trusts intuition, "some level of my intelligence" says "something smart without my really being able to say what was smart about it". Upon the basis of this attitude, we were able to review his treatment of the Chinese in Slapstick. They seemed to have an idea of how men might live together which was more advanced than that supported by the Western world, as he viewed it. Looking back, then, to his earlier works, we saw that this impression may always have been present--through Sirens of Titan, God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, Breakfast of Champions, and his discussion of trade unions--even while he declaimed the idea of his being a radical in any sense. That his trust in intuition may have allowed a more forthright consciousness of Communism in Slapstick, and that this trust may have allowed more open consideration of his attitudes towards Communism, Socialism, and their

similarities to family ideals in Jailbird encourages us to approve of this writer. His fanciful and amusing stories seem directed by a profound undercurrent, by the force of sincerity and of honesty to his own mind.

NOTES

Section I (Introduction)

¹Howard Harper, Desperate Faith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 192.

²Leonard Leff, "Utopia Reconstructed: Alienation in Vonnegut's God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater", Critique, 12 (1971), 29.

³"The Unconfirmed Thesis: Kurt Vonnegut, Black Humour, and Contemporary Art", Critique, 12 (1971), 14.

⁴Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., The Sirens of Titan, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1959), p. 180. Future references to the text will employ this edition.

⁵Vonnegut, The Sirens of Titan, p. 313. This passage is referred to also by David Goldsmith, Kurt Vonnegut: Fantasist of Fire and Ice (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), p. 24.

⁶Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Cat's Cradle (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963), p. 71. Future references to the text will employ this edition.

⁷Jerome Klinkowitz, "Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and the Crime of His Times", Critique, 12 (1971), 49.

⁸Richard Boddke, "Great Sorrows and Small Joys: The World of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.", Cross Currents, 20 (1970), 38.

⁹Slaughterhouse-Five (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1969). Future references to the text will employ this edition.

¹⁰Peter Reed, "The Later Vonnegut", Vonnegut in America (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1972), p. 175.

¹¹"Playboy Interview", Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1975), p. 242. Future references to the interview will employ this text.

Section II (Background to the Extended Family)

¹Richard Giannone, Vonnegut: A Preface to His Novels (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1977), pp. 4-5.

²James Lundquist, Kurt Vonnegut (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977), p. 12.

³Giannone, Vonnegut: A Preface to His Novels, p. 65.

⁴Kurt Vonnegut, Jailbird (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1979), p. 83. Future references to the novel will employ this text.

⁵Kurt Vonnegut, Slapstick (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1976), p. 99. Future references to the novel will employ this text.

⁶Kurt Vonnegut, "The Hyannis Port Story", Welcome to the Monkey House (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), p. 148. Future references to stories in Welcome to the Monkey House will employ this edition.

⁷Kurt Vonnegut, "The Manned Missiles", Welcome to the Monkey House, p. 268.

⁸Kurt Vonnegut, "Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son", Welcome to the Monkey House, p. 203.

⁹Jerome Klinkowitz, Vonnegut in America, p. 18; "Why They Read Vonnegut", The Vonnegut Statement, pp. 28-29; Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., p. 22.

¹⁰Kurt Vonnegut, "Long Walk to Forever", Welcome to the Monkey House, p. 54.

¹¹Kurt Vonnegut, Happy Birthday, Wanda June (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970), p. 131. Future references to the text will employ this edition.

¹²Examples could be: "The Foster Portfolio", "Next Door", "More Stately Mansions", "The Hyannis Port Story", "The Eupho Question", "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow", and "The Manned Missiles". These are collected in Welcome to the Monkey House.

¹³"The Foster Portfolio", Welcome to the Monkey House, p. 63.

¹⁴"More Stately Mansions", Welcome to the Monkey House, p. 132.

¹⁵The pull in Slaughterhouse-Five between Determinism and Compassion was the subject of a discussion on Post World War II American Fiction, Trent University, October 11, 1977.

¹⁶Slapstick, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷Kurt Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1973), p. 288. Future references to the text will employ this edition.

¹⁸Monica Loeb, Vonnegut's Duty Dance with Death: Theme and Structure in Slaughterhouse-Five (Umea Studies in the Humanities, 1979), p. 60.

¹⁹Lundquist, Kurt Vonnegut, p. 5.

²⁰Giannone, Vonnegut: A Preface to His Novels, pp. 114-15.

²¹Ibid.

²²Kurt Vonnegut, "Robert Short Interviews Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Chicago- June 8, 1976", Something to Believe In (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 289. Future references to the interview will employ this text.

²³Goldsmith, Kurt Vonnegut: Fantasist of Fire and Ice, p. xiii. Also in Kurt Vonnegut's Preface, Welcome to the Monkey House.

²⁴Kurt Vonnegut, "D.P.", Welcome to the Monkey House, p. 158.

²⁵Peter J. Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1972), p. 142.

²⁶ Stanley Schatt, "The World of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.", Critique, 12 (1971), 109.

²⁷ Peter J. Reed, "The Later Vonnegut", The Vonnegut Statement, p. 179.

²⁸ Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., p. 109.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

³⁰ Max Shulz, "The Unconfirmed Thesis", 5-28.

³¹ Kurt Vonnegut, "The Sexual Revolution" from Palm Sunday, Rolling Stone, 339 (March 1981), 25.

³² James M. Mellard, "The Modes of Vonnegut's Fiction: Or Player Piano Ousts Mechanical Bride and the Sirens of Titan invade The Gutenberg Galaxy", The Vonnegut Statement, p. 181.

³³ Ernest W. Ranley, "What Are People For?", Commonweal, 94, 211.

³⁴ Kurt Vonnegut, "EPICAC", Welcome to the Monkey House, p. 284.

Section III (Vonnegut's Later Response to These Problems)

¹ "Biafra: A People Betrayed", Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon, p. 147.

² Vonnegut in America, pp. 32-33.

³ Kurt Vonnegut, "An Interview with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.," by Carey Horwitz, Library Journal, 98 (April 1973), 1311.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kurt Vonnegut: Fantasist of Fire and Ice, p. 24.

⁶ "The Unconfirmed Thesis", p. 13.

⁷ "Yes, We Have No Nirvanas", Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon, p. 38.

Section IV (Conclusion)

- ¹Lundquist, Kurt Vonnegut, p. 13.
- ²"Address to the Graduating Class at Bennington College",
Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloons, p. 165.
- ³Robert Alter, "The New American Novel", Commentary, 60
(November 1975), 46.
- ⁴Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., p. 86.
- ⁵Giannone, Vonnegut: A Preface to His Novels, p. 70.

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