Chapter-III

Major Themes in Vonnegut’s Early Novels
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MAJOR THEMES IN KURT VONNEGUT’S EARLY NOVELS

Themes and techniques constitute the body and soul of any literary creation. In this context it is significant that Vonnegut’s literary creations are endowed with fantastic themes and marvellous techniques. An analysis of Vonnegut’s early novels reveals the shaping forces of fictional art that contributed to his growth and development as a major American novelist.

What makes Vonnegut’s fiction so fascinating is the fusion of the themes of mechanization, war and death, the paradoxical contrast between illusion and reality and the psychic dimension as manifested in his early novels. David Ketterer and William E. Me Nelly have treated him as mere science-fiction writer dealing with fantasy. Robert Scholes and Max F. Schulz have ably demonstrated his merit as a Black Humourist. Indeed, he has probably been subjected to more critical name-calling than any other contemporary American writer. Vonnegut has been called a fabulist, a fantasist, an absurdist, a
humourist, a black humourist, a broken humourist, a satirist and perhaps most often, a science fictionist. It may also be noted here that Vonnegut is a myth-maker and a master craftsman presenting schizophrenic ingredients of the human psyche in his early novels.

I

Among the various themes presented by Vonnegut in his novels, I shall focus on the two most prominent themes—the elements of myth and schizophrenia inextricably interwoven in his early novels. The early novels chosen for my study are: Player Piano, The Sirens of Titan, Mother Night, and Slaughterhouse Five.

Myths have always been bound up with Vonnegut’s imagination and evidently his novels are invested with myth and fantasy. Before I discuss the treatment of myths in Vonnegut’s novels, I shall very briefly mention the origin and importance of myths in society and their place in literature.

The origin of ‘Myth’ can be traced back to the Greek word ‘Mythos’, i.e., ‘any thing uttered by word of mouth’. According to
M.H. Abrams, 'Mythos' in classical Greek signifies any story or plot, whether true or invented (1993:121). But in general terms, myths are merely primitive fictions, illusions or opinions based on false reasoning. As a rule it involves supernatural beings or supra-human beings. It also explains the origin or creation of things. Hence it refers to a legendary-traditional and anonymous story present in the culture of a country that vaguely explains, justifies, and reflects its social modes, values, beliefs and customs by using supernatural or imaginative terms.

Highlighting the importance of myths in society, Kimball Young writes, "Without them the past and the present as well as the future would seem chaotic. With them the world takes new meaning—they make our social-cultural reality stable, predictable and capable of being endured" (1951, 199). Consequently, myths also help to achieve a certain degree of synthesis in social environment. They determine the social values that serve to maintain the social control.

The famous anthropologist Malinowsky refused to consider myths as imaginary. In this tradition modern scholars now recognize
that myth is no dead form, a relic of antiquity, an empty survival. It has a sound psychological basis. In fact, had they been based completely on the imaginary beliefs of the people the myths could not have so credulously stood the test of time and continued in future? Thus, myths are real and actual part of the social and cultural environment.

Myths have occupied a prominent place in literary analysis. Psychology and Anthropology have made significant contribution to the growth and development of myth criticism in literature. Literary artists in every age have drawn their source of inspiration from stories of ancient mythology. They have made use of myths in their works. Mark Schorer says in William Blake: the Politics of Vision, "Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend" (1946, 29)

Myths dominate and shape the everyday life of the common man. The world of myth is a continuous source of the knowledge
needed for crucial problems in man's existence, war and peace, life and death, truth and falsehood, good and evil.

Myths have been used variously. Indeed, they play such a necessary part in human existence that they have often been used as a basic tool in exploring the mystery of life. Nowhere have the myths been so much exploited as in man's literary expression.

One of the basic approaches to the study of fiction, especially American fictions is to understand and create an atmosphere of affection to improve it by retrieving its lost innocence, a glory symbolized by the image of Eden.

I shall now touch upon the various myths as reflected in Vonnegut's early novels such as Player Piano, The Sirens of Titan, Mother Night and Slaughterhouse as Five.

Vonnegut's conventional myths fall into two distinct categories: classical and biblical. Vonnegut's heroes can be regarded as 'messiah' figures, innocent victims who suffer unjustifiably but who also bring
to the world a radically new kind of wisdom. Vonnegut’s use of existing stories and myths lend added meaning to his material – his use, for instance, of Homer’s Odyssey in Happy Birthday, Wanda June and the Sermon on the Mount in Jailbird. Vonnegut’s major themes are the guilt and madness, the irrevocable loss of innocence of America as a capitalist and militaristic power. Raymond Olderman aptly notes, “The old theme of the American Adam aspiring to move forward in time and space unencumbered by memory of guilt or reflection of his limitations is certainly unavailable to the guilt ridden psyche of modern man”. In my analysis I have substantially corroborated with this view. I have also added a few points to highlight the complexities and nuances of Vonnegut’s mythic technique.

Vonnegut’s mythic references are always of the use of localized mythic motifs in a part of the narrative e.g., a single event or character, without running consistently through the whole narrative in the earlier novels. The world as Vonnegut gives it to us in his fictional visions is, to use biblical terms, fallen. It is a world in which human beings are essentially slaves to forces they can’t control—corrosive
forces like nature and time, cruel forces like unjustly contrived economic and political systems, destructive forces like the application of science to military ends, incomprehensible forces like one’s own emotional vulnerabilities. Into this worlds, Vonnegut places his protagonist, all of whom are, in one way or another, fragile, sensitive, troubled people who try to escape from life as they have found it, from their slavery to time, to others, to their own human natures.

Here I shall focus on the merging of the small scale Eden and the myth of large scale Utopia evident in Vonnegut’s earliest novels, Player Piano (1952), The Sirens of Titan (1959) Mother night (1962) and Slaughter house – Five (1969).

Now I intend to discuss the myth of Eden in his novel Player Piano. The protagonist of Player Piano, Paul Proteus, looks with dissatisfaction upon a society that places machinery over individuals, efficiency over human dignity. The machines themselves, of course, are not the problem; the inhuman attitudes of the powers that be are. Paul’s response to his dissatisfaction is two fold. First, he tries to escape into what we immediately recognize as the conventional
agricultural ideal of life, which is linked, in literary terms, to the prototypical Garden of Eden, the prime agricultural myth closely with the humans from which they themselves derive. When that scheme fails, Paul becomes a participant – at first forcibly and later voluntarily – in a political plot to change his society itself, to restore dignity to humanity, in the narrator's significant terms, to 'make himself the new Messiah and Ilium the new Eden'.(105)

Like its famous dystopian antecedents, Player Piano is set in a post war society that is sharply polarized. One pole is modern, civilized, technologically advanced society, the potent segment that wields all of the political power, wealth and prestige; the other pole is occupied by the political and material have-nots, the mass of impotent humanity living in the relative squalor of places with names like the Prole District or the Savage Reservation or Homestead, placed within this familiar generic context

I intend to discuss here Vonnegut's version of the future as political nightmare that seems the weakest of the well-known dystopian visions, the most ambiguous in terms of what the
protagonist want out of life and what he dislikes about the society in which he holds so high a place. While acknowledging the objective truth that technology and world law have made the Earth a better place than it was before the war, a pleasant and convenient place in which to sweat out Judgement Day, Paul also romantically yearns for a past about which he knows virtually nothing.

Paul is like a person who, after reading a historical fiction, wistfully longs to have lived at an earlier time, a more exciting and tumultuous period, anything other than the boring present. This, so to speak, 'literary bias' is further suggested by Vonnegut's allusions to the conventional myths of the golden age and Judgement Day. That Paul's musings are essentially irrational is clear, but, then again, such irrationality well serves Vonnegut's major premise: the dichotomy between the predictable and rational functioning of technocracy on one end, and the inherent unpredictability and irrationality of human fears and desires on the other.

The pianos is the central symbol in the novel of a society whose fundamental human activities, including the arts, have been taken over
by machines and is, therefore, bled dry of all human feelings. The piano, the narrator ruefully observes, delivers “exactly five cents worth of joy” (38). The real catalyst for change in Paul is Reverend James. J. Lasher, the most sinister and intriguing of the homestead characters, who prompts Paul to take charge of his life. Claiming to be an anthropologist and chaplain, Lasher provides cynical commentary on the current state of spiritual affairs.

When I had a congregation before the war,’ he resentfully says to Paul and Ed Finnerty, I used to tell them that the life of their spirit in relation to God was the biggest thing in their lives, and their part in economy was nothing by comparison. Now, you people have engineered them out of their part in economy, in the market place, and they are finding out most of them-- that what’s left is just about zero (92).

I have discussed here the Messianic myth that touch upon new hopes for better work. Lasher has already formed an insurgent organization whose quasi-religious nature is indicated by the fact he wants to elevate someone to ‘Messiah’ status, someone who will lead the disaffected workers politically and spiritually back to the dignity they once enjoyed. The possibilities of this spiritual materialism, as it were, are not lost on the inebriated Paul Proteus. Ironically, the new way of life he has chosen is hardly new at all, indeed, it is quite
conventional. What Paul decides to make for himself is a little Eden, a decidedly personal rural paradise and not the large scale one he perceived of in the bar. In his monumental work *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Mark notes:

> Though the contradiction between rural myth and technological fact is often acknowledged, the ancient ideal still sieves the native imagination. Even those Americans who acknowledge the facts and understand the fables seem to cling, after their fashion, to the pastoral hope.

Vonnegut goes well out of his way to present Paul’s ‘solution’ in obvious, even heavy-handed terms. First, Paul suddenly develops a taste for reading novels—"novels wherein the hero lived vigorously and out-of doors, dealing directly with nature, dependent upon basic cunning and physical strength for survival. . . . He wanted to deal, not with society, but only with Earth as God had given it to man" (135). When pursuing his newly found ideals, he purchases a farm in a “completely isolated backwater, cut off from the boiling rabid of history, society, and economy. Timeless”. (147).

It is significant that Vonnegut’s characters are continually in search of meaning in a shifting universe. They want stability and escape. They struggle with loneliness; they recoil from massacres;
they cringe at evil. Like all people in all societies, they both inherit and make bulwarks against the flux. Subconsciously Paul also makes a bulwark against the instability he feels and he makes it out of culturally inherited materials. This inheritance is doubly significant in American fiction, for it includes suggestions of both the myth of Eden itself and the concept of the American Eden, particularly as it applied to the Western frontier.

Before I proceed, I wish to discuss Paul’s escape into what we immediately recognize as the conventional agricultural ideal of life which is linked, in literary terms, to the pastoral form and before that to the prototypical Garden of Eden. Paul’s desire to escape from the “boiling rabid” of society surely conjures up vision of this latter myth. The Eden myth is also represented here. Paul wants to experience the “Earth as God had given it to man”. In mythic terms, that God – given Earth was originally an agricultural ‘nation of two’ and that is what Paul wants to make here, even if he has to delude himself to do it. Farming becomes to him “a magic world” (144), the dilapidated farm, devoid of all modern conveniences, becomes to him “irresistible” (147), and his saccharine, social-climbing wife, he imagines, will be
“enchanted, stunned, even, by this completely authentic microcosm of the past”. (149) Rather, so desperately does he want to escape into the timeless innocence of the Edenic World that he constructs for himself an elaborate fiction about his wife, about the farm, about himself, even about time itself.

This is observed when, finding an old grandfather clock in the farm, he sets his “shock-proof, water-proof, anti-magnetic, glow in-the-dark, self-winding chronometer” (148-149) twelve minutes behind to match, in symbolic terms, the antique world’s sense of time. And, in what is perhaps the clearest indication of his Edenic pursuit, he also suggests to the real estate agent that the phrase “After us the deluge” will be inscribed over the mantel. Given his pregnant allusion to the ‘deluge’, perhaps he realized all along that even Eden itself was not timeless, nor was the antique world as described in biblical myth as innocent as he supposed in his reveries. “He had not gone back” (246), he comes to realize, and he can’t.

Paul Proteus discovers that the pastoral ideal, unlike mechanization does not work. Not only is the Organization that Paul
joins irrational in terms of its indiscriminate destruction of machinery; it is also irrational in terms of its almost literal subscription to myth. The Ghost Shirt Society, under the Reverend Lasher’s direction is named for a group of Indians who, fortified only with “magical shirts” and religious faith, fought the intruding white man and lost. Irrationality, mythic faith in innocence, conscious “playing”, and serious childishness are the keynotes of this group, as Lasher admits to Paul.

It may be mentioned here that most of the rebels, Paul included, undermine their own human dignity for their engagement in the cause. This is shown to be motivated less out of humanitarian concern than revenge, malicious destruction, and other sordid motives. Their destruction of sewage disposal plants along with any other machine they locate shows that their ill-planned rebellion was Saturnalian rather than political, childish without the serious dimension that Lasher earlier used to justify their childishness. The conclusion of the novel sums up the motives for action in the novel but none of those are good, clean, altruistic, or humanitarian motives. Although Orwell’s and Huxley’s respective endings to their dystopian nightmares are
harsher than Vonnegut’s, theirs are clearer and easier to understand. The individual there contends with a large political system and loses. Here, however, the force contended with is the tangled web of the self, capable of misrepresentation, of asserting humanitarian motives for strictly personal ends, of deception and inconsistency.

In the final analysis, Player Piano is an interesting novel which portrays the human psyche, an exploration of the human urge to envision and create utopias—whether through technology or in dreams based upon mythic models—and a scrutiny of the human condition and its susceptibility to the reality of tedium vitae.

Machines have not imprisoned the people of Ilium; their own humanity has, and even if they had managed to dismantle completely the current technocracy, Vonnegut suggests that they would only be making way for another group of engineers with their own technologies and utopian schemes to work out.

Here I have given a broad overview of the state of the primal innocence. Vonnegut explicitly or by implication links this altered
experience to the biblical myth, beginning in the decidedly fallen world and moving backwards to the world of Adam and Eve.

In Vonnegut’s *The Sirens of Titan*, the dichotomy between internal and external paradises is presented in an inimitable style. The journey into morally empty space, which most of the narrative concerns, will culminate in this discovery by the protagonist, Malachi Constant, who significantly, is one of the richest and most powerful men in the world at the beginning of the novel. Malachi along with his mate, Beatrice and their son, Chrono, find the wisdom and goodness of love after they have taken up residence on an Edenic Titan, far from the troubled – fallen – world. In effect, they discover what Milton calls “Paradise within”.

In *The Sirens of Titan*, the movement towards an Eden begins with its antithesis, the fallen world. The world into which the enigmatic Winston Niles Rumfoord periodically materializes is quite troubled, and the primary cause of its trouble, Vonnegut is careful to point out, has to do with the spiritual alienation of the species, the sense that life is without inherent meaning colliding with the desperate
belief that there must be some source of meaning 'out there' somewhere.

To begin with, there is Rumfoord's anomalous existence itself. Having flown his private spaceship into a chrono-synclastic infundibulum, defined as one of the places "where all the different kinds of truths fit together" (14), he exists now as a wave phenomenon that materializes on earth only at fixed intervals, the miraculous materializations that people there so avidly await. At the time he lost his physical substantiality, he gained certain extraordinary talents, including the ability to read minds (22) and to see into the future (24). He does not hesitate to use these talents in his self-appointed mission to reorder human priorities and thus save mankind from meaninglessness.

That salvation will depend upon Rumfoord's secretive manipulation of two conceptual forms that have traditionally united and divided people through the centuries--political and religion. His plan includes two parts--an orchestrated "Martian" attack upon the earth and then his establishment of the Church of God of the Utterly
Indifferent—both parts involving his shamelessly taking control over matters of life and death.

Vonnegut deliberately chooses a very wealthy, wet bred and snobbish man for his role. Rumfoord is a person of old wealth as directly opposed to the nouveau-riche Malachi Constant which is evident in terms of the attitudes towards life, towards his own worth, and towards other people. These attitudes are revealed in a conversation with Malachi in the beginning of the novel.

Constant is, to be sure, a perceptive man. He immediately feels diminished to precisely the degree that Rumford intends. In an ironic version of the Sermon on the Mount, Rumfoord delivers his diatribe against his invented symbolic version of Malachi Constant from up in a tree, and then he informs Malachi that he, along with Rumford’s own wife, Beatrice, and the child born of the union of Beatrice and Malachi, Chrono, will be banished to Titan, a warm and fecund moon of Saturn. The three of them, Rumfoord decrees, will live there in safety and comfort, though in exile from their native earth, and the purpose of this banishment is “so that the Church of God of the
Utterly Indifferent can have a drama of dignified self-sacrifice to remember and ponder through all time (255).

Even more ironic is Rumfoord's resentment over what he perceives as a betrayal by one of his extraterrestrial cohorts. All along, Rumfoord has been aided in his schemes by Salo, a robotic creature from the planet, Tralfamadore, who had been delivering a message when his spaceship broke down on Titan. The replacement part that the Tralfamadorians eventually send him turns out to be a piece of metal that Chrono carries around as his piece of good luck.

In other words, it is evident here that, while Rumfoord thought that he was controlling the destinies of human beings on Earth and the lives of Malachi and Beatrice, it was eventually he who was being controlled by the Tralfamadorians to deliver the replacement part. That realization is a bitter pill for Rumfoord to swallow, and he takes his frustration out on the kindly robot, complaining that the Tralfamadorians have "reached into the solar system, picked me up, and used me like a handy-dandy potato peeler!" (285)
As for Vonnegut's other wealthy American, Malachi Constant, the author reserves a different sort of fate for him, a kinder one, and there, too, we see the working out of yet another kind of poetic justice. For all his life, Malachi has been both blessed and victimized by luck or chance. First he inherited his three-billion-dollar from his father, Noel, who made the money through blind luck playing the stock market by using the initials of corporations that coincided with the first lines of the Bible. He died by the time he reached the creation of light in Genesis. After his meeting with Rumfoord, Malachi's luck changes. He loses his entire fortune and is subsequently used by Rumfoord as a pawn in the latter’s schemes for world unification. In the end, finally, he finds happiness on Titan with his mate and his son. He will learn to deliver the only message that we have to deliver—a life. In effect, Malachi discovers an Edenic place and, more important, what Milton would call “the paradise within”.

It is significant that this latter discovery allows him to find in the first place the meaning of life, which is to take charge of our lives whenever we can and to love others. Significantly Vonnegut allows Malachi, along with his equally abused son and mate, to discover the
internal paradise of meaning at the same time that Rumfoord, the great “tribal god” discovers the failure of his own external paradise on earth. The external paradise that Malachi and his family find in Titan, Vonnegut never explicitly calls it Eden, and yet it is quite clear that this fictional place is meant to summon up visions of an Edenic locus and way of life. Malachi Constant, finally also finds happiness on Titan, a contentment that is much more complete and satisfying than anything he once enjoyed, even as the richest Earthling.

Aging peacefully and gracefully, going about naked most of the time, Malachi learns in this paradisal place the value of love, both for his son and his mate. He is with Beatrice when she dies, and, in what I find most touching scene in the book is when she thanks him for having used her, for bothering with her at all. After her death, Malachi will be left alone, but he will also be left with an important realization, which, in effect, constitutes the theme of The Sirens of Titan: that “a purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved”. (313)
It is significant that there is a telling irony in the entire Titan episode. While Beatrice, Chrono, and Malachi enjoy a paradise without and within there, it is a paradise that involves physical separation from their kind. It is only through forcible removal from the society of human beings that they achieve their contentment, and the implication here is that they would never have enjoyed anything like the sort of happiness had they remained on earth.

It has been observed that to some extent this kind of mythic return is precisely what Vonnegut hopes to effect for many of his characters. Paul Proteus and almost every one of Vonnegut’s protagonists who tries to construct a little Eden for him, envisions a limited sphere of operations, which includes a mate, a happy environment away from the troubled world. Like these other protagonists Malachi Constant cannot enjoy his paradise once his mate is dead; and so, he accepts in the end the Tralfamadorian robot’s offer to take him back to earth, where he will die a death because of the compassion shown him by Salo. That compassion reveals Vonnegut’s pervasive irony. The little robot, the machine that Rumfoord earlier accused of lacking feeling, hypnotizes Malachi so
that, as he dies, he imagines that he sees his best friend, Stony Stevenson, taking him to paradise, where Beatrice awaits, where everyone is happy forever, or, as Stevenson qualifies matters, “as long as the bloody Universe holds together” (319).

Vonnegut’s endings always leave the reader uncomfortable suggesting a compromise in a dire situation, and the maintenance of illusory hope in the face of existential hopelessness. Both Billy and Malachi pursue Genesis after their fashion, and the illusion of having attained an external Eden and the actual attainment of a “paradise within” is good enough for them.

Before I examine the application of myth of Eden in Mother Night I wish to discuss the implication of ‘Night’. In his next novel Mother Night Vonnegut writes that this is the only story whose main moral is about “we are what we pretend to be” (v), and at the end of the introduction, he adds two other morals, that “when you are dead you are dead” and that one should “make love when you can because it’s good for you” (vii). These thematic announcement, for all their simplicity of articulation and facetiousness of tone, turn out to be
accurate assessments of the novel’s concerns. Mother Night, the fictional autobiography of the erstwhile playwright, Nazi propagandist, and American spy Howard Campbell, Jr., is about nothing so much as pretence (political, artistic, and personal), death and love.

Writers of myth-based fictions both classical and biblical have used ‘Night’ to refer to a time and condition prior to creation, which is often defined not in terms of making something out of nothing but rather as the imposition of form and order on chaotic matter. Both chaos and the ordered universe apply to physical matter, but each condition also has moral implications as well, chaos representing the absence of a moral order and civilizing social influence.

In works where ‘Night’ is referred to, it is almost invariably the latter sense that is evoked. One of the oldest literary accounts of ‘Night’ is found in Hesiod’s Theogony (ca. 700 B.C), where primal ‘Chaos’ (void) and ‘Night’ are seen as the progenitors of the passion, principles, and states of being that themselves precede the physical and moral order. John Milton features ‘Night’ and ‘Chaos’ as the
monarchical anarchs of the abyss that Satan travels through on his journey from Hell to God’s newly created Earth, which he spitefully hopes to mar. Alexander Pope’s neoclassical mock epic, The Dunciad, also employs ‘Night’ and ‘Chaos’ from a different perspective from Milton’s. Satirizing the decline in artistic values and civilization in his own time, Pope casts his diatribe in terms of the mythic retrogression of the world, moving all the way back to the establishment of chaos and Night’s cosmic supremacy. In both Milton’s and Pope’s visions, ‘Night’ and ‘Chaos’ represent not only the literal embodiments of the forces of miscreation, the “uncreating world”, but also and most importantly moral and intellectual disorder as well.

Now I shall show in my analysis the concept of mythic backward movements and miscreations applied to Vonnegut’s novel, even though Campbell never mentions ‘Night’ in the autobiography itself. For his entire life, Campbell is involved in nothing so much as attempting to create for himself a little universe, a limited sphere of operations in which he can enjoy order, beauty, light, and love. As an artist, he chooses things from the dark and chaotic material of life and creates “worlds”.

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Mother Night is not concerned simply with the small, beguiling truths that one invents for one self to survive happily. Its main focus is the collision of one man’s little world with those of potent others within the greater chaos, and in a more general and figurative sense, with the endless conflict between our own “supercilious light” and the greater darkness. The process leading to Night’s eventual victory begins just after Howard Campbell has put the finishing touches on his pleasant little world. Howard’s recruitment by Frank Wirtanen (code named his “Blue Fairy Godmother”) to serve as a Nazi propagandist and an American agent comes, therefore, at a thematically significant point in the narrative. Howard recalls his thoughts prior to his encounter with Wirtanen in the Tiergarten in Berlin:

I was sitting along on a park bench in the sunshine that day, thinking of a fourth play that was beginning to write itself in my mind. It gave itself a little, which was “Das Reich der Zwei” — “Nation of Two”.

It was going to be about the love my wife and I had for each other. It was going to show how a pair of lovers in a world gone mad could survive by being loyal only to a nation composed of themselves—a nation of two. (37)
This description draws together two forms of escape that Howard was content to engage in—his art and his love for his wife, the latter related to the former not only in the subject matter of the play, but also because his wife, Helga Noth, is the principle actress in his productions. Howard is often painfully honest about his inner reality—his feelings and perceptions of the world. Howard possesses the same kind of pathetic naivete that, Billy Pilgrim or Rudy Waltz does a self limiting view of life. In other words, Vonnegut has a fairly typical perspective of life, a dual vision that allows to recognize Howard’s weakness and to sympathize with his escapist “solutions” because we all often seek escape of one kind or another.

I would like to show how faced with harsh realities of life, Vonnegut’s protagonist retreats to places and to states of mind that evoke the image of Eden primordially associated with peace, unity and innocence.

Like most of Vonnegut’s protagonists, particularly those he places in very stressful and uncontrollable situations like war or politics, Howard is seeking not to assess and co-operate in external
circumstances but to escape from them however he can. Howard uses as a means of escape a mental construct that represents for him a recreation of reality along familiar mythic lines. A particular creation myth and a conventional one that Vonnegut turns to again and again is the story of Noah.

Late in the novel, in a chapter entitled “No Dove, No Covenant”, Howard briefly describes his life with Helga during the war, likening his feelings upon entering his New York apartment to those he experience in Berlin many years before:

The air was clean.

The feeling of a state old building suddenly laid open, an infected atmosphere laced, made clean, was familiar to me. I had felt it often enough in Berlin. Helga and I were bombed out twice. Both times there was a staircase left to clime.

One time we climbed the stairs to a roofless and windowless house, a house otherwise magically undisturbed. Another time, we climbed the stairs to cold thin air, two floors below where home had been. Both moments at those splintered stair heads under the open sky were exquisite.

The exquisiteness went on for only a short time, naturally, for like any human family, we loved our nests and needed them. But, for a minute or two, any way, Helga and I felt like Noah and his wife on Mount Ararat.
This feeling does not and cannot last. They soon realized, he goes on, that the flood, far from being over, had scarcely begun, that the menace of falling bombs proved to them that they were ordinary people, without dove or covenant to show their special status or their divine protection.

Applying Noah’s experiences before and after the Flood to Howard’s experiences, he is in a comparable position. Howard has long found the world to be a mad and corrupt place in which he takes little interest. In his own eyes he is like the blameless Noah in that he considers himself sane while those around him are mad; and he remains sane, he believes, by simply refusing to participate in the external world, only in the well ordered and just world of his own artistic creation. Even Frank Wirtanen, who wants to recruit Howard as a spy— in effect, to force him to participate in the madness— remarks upon Howard’s “pristine artistic creation: “...you admire pure
hearts and heroes ...you love good and hate evil...you believe in romance"(41).

In other words, Howard artistically projects his own preferences for a sane, ordered, and just world; and since he knows that the world as it is constituted does not share in his preferences for order, he lives through his creations.

Vonnegut is not yet ready, even at this point to abandon the mythic imagery he has been using to describe Howard’s inner existence. Instead, he constructs two other kinds of Eden which serve to underscore the failure of Howard’s escapist creation. The first of these Edens takes the form of a simple reflection on life by a lonely man. The second, which is more complex, is placed within the larger context of Howard’s pursuit of Genesis through love and art. After the war, Howard spends fifteen years in New York, and he calls both the place and the time there his “purgatory” (30), even though no real purging occurs during this time. In fact, he might well have called this harsh experience his “nation of one”. Both choosing
anonymity thrust upon him by the condition of life in that mammoth place, Howard lives a simple and lonely life in an attic apartment, which he later liken to his Berlin apartment. That place in itself has no significance for Howard; and so, ironically, the physical dangers present in wartime. Berlin was diminished by the happiness he made and enjoyed there and, conversely, the relative safety of a New York apartment makes for a sad and lonely existence.

Here I have also highlighted Vonnegut’s off-repeated term “nation of two” and how he retreats further to the divine creative act itself.

In contrast, after the war, Howard again finds himself musing on the question of a severely limited world, only now he is excluded from that world, an outsider looking in. He still has Edenic preoccupations, only this time he finds himself a spectator rather than a creator and an active participant in the Edenic life. The reference to Eden also represents a redefinition of terms. Unlike his little nation of two, this Eden takes place in
the backyard world of childhood—a world where the game can be played for fun and where the game ends whenever the participants says it does.

Howard would certainly like to inhabit a world where he can utter a familiar cry and thus “end my own endless game of hide-and-seek” (30). This endless game ends by an article in a reactionary newspaper, The white Christian Minuteman. The article indicates Howard’s whereabouts and praises his service to the Nazis during the war, has the effect of driving Howard into the open, where he becomes fair game of haters of other sorts. His hide-and-seek game is indeed about to end and a much more serious and heart breaking game is about to begin.

This new game involves that radical misuse of his creations, love and art, which, though he really engaged in neither during fifteen years in New York, had nevertheless, remained intellectually untainted for him. In one of his poems, Howard speaks of “the great machine of history” calling it a huge steam roller that kills, but only if
one is foolish enough to stand in its path—in other words, to be an active participant in it:

My love and I, we ran away,
The engine did not find us.
We ran up to a mountain top,
Left history far behind us.
Perhaps we should have stayed and died
But somehow we do not think so
We want to see where history had been,
Any my, the dead did stink so. (95)

The mountain top, presumably the Mount Ararat that he speaks of earlier, represents not their physical removal from the war (the steamroller's path) but their intellectual retreat, their refusal to give themselves over completely to the homicidal madness around them. It is this violation of self, this subversion of his mythical recreations which ushers in the reign of Mother Night and which causes Howard in the end to prefer death to freedom.
Night's victory is accomplished not by violence but by smooth guile and dumb luck. With a wood-carving set bought from a military-surplus store, he carves a set of chessmen and then impulsively knocks on a neighbor's door to show him "the marvellous thing I made". (48) That neighbor as named George Kraft, as Howard dark luck would have it is a Russian spy named Iona Patapov, posing as an artist.

When Kraft reveals Howard's whereabouts to Jones he turns the privileged revelation of Howard's identity into a Russian political cause; Jones, by publishing the information, made it possible for Howard's various "enemies" to find him out.

Now I would like to highlight Howard's betrayal through his art. The other subversion of Howard's invented universe concerns his art. Frank Wirtanen, Howard's Blue Fairy godmother, reappears near the end of the novel and tells Howard not only that Kraft and Resi are Russian agents, pretending to be citizens of his nation of two or three, but also that his works have been plagiarized by one Stefan Bodovskov, a Russian who found Howard's trunk and passed the
works off as his own, becoming famous and wealthy in the process. The most famous of Bodovskov's supposed writing was a narrative called *Memories of a Monogamous Casanova*, an illustrated edition of which fetched forty extra rubles in Russia, was a theft of Howard's writing. Howard gets profoundly disturbed. The part of me that wanted to tell the truth, he says, "got turned into an expert liar! The lover in me got turned into a pornographer! The artist in me got turned into ugliness such as the world has rarely seen before" (150)

The violation of the personal document that represents for Howard the union of his prime creative activities – art and love ushers in the ruinous reign of a primeval Night in his world. "Alles Kaput", he says of this world, and though he returns for a while to his friends, Howard is a man who has lost what little desire to live that he had possessed.

I have discussed here how Vonnegut has ironically dealt with Howard.
Vonnegut has reserved the most ironic scenes in *Mother Night* for the concluding part of the novel, for it is here, amid the crushing miscreation that his world has undergone, that Howard takes some of the most decisive steps in his life. First, he returns to his apartment and discovers, appropriately enough, that the backyard Eden outside his window is deserted, and that “there was no one in it to cry, as I should have liked someone to cry: ‘olly – olly – ox – in – freeeeeeee” (176). He confronts his “own personal Fury” (176), Bernard O’Hare, pointedly asserting his own definition of evil —“it’s that large part of every man that wants to hate without limit” (181), assaulting O’Hare physically when he calls Howard a vile name, and finally tormenting his tormentor with the latter’s own failures in life, failures no amount of patriotic posing will undo.

Following this confrontation, Howard decides to give himself up to a Jewish woman who lives in his apartment building, a former Auschwitz. Ultimately, he is brought to trial in Jerusalem, and though he is set free, again through the agency of his “Blue Fairy Godmother”, it is not freedom that he desires any longer; and he vows that he will hang himself that very night. He allowed the forces of
Mother Night to come in and establish her reign; and when those forces, represented by the tribunal in Jerusalem, fail to make the short work of him—he decides to take matters into his own hands.

In many ways, Mother Night is one of Vonnegut’s most pessimistic novels, because, in the end, he does not allow Howard Campbell even the solace of self-deception. It is Howard’s very sanity that allows him to witness the uncreation of his world, its invasion by chaos and Mother Night.

I aim to show here how the myth of Eden has consistently been depicted in Vonnegut’s most successful novel, Slaughterhouse Five. We can clearly see the working out of mythic paradigm that Vonnegut presents in this fiction.

In Slaughterhouse Five Vonnegut draws a linkage between Eden and Tralfamadore. From the moment he “comes unstuck in time”; Billy Pilgrim tries to construct for himself an Edenic experience out of materials he garners over the course of some twenty years. Although Billy’s Eden differs very much from Paul Proteus’s,
Malachi Constant’s and Howard Campbell’s, Vonnegut subtly manipulates the same myth. And ironically, the pathetic protagonist of *Slaughterhouse Five* is the most successful of his central figures in realizing his central pursuit of Genesis.

In my analysis it is evident that Vonnegut clearly demonstrates that Billy Pilgrim’s madness has a method in it. His ‘trip’ to Tralfamadore and the ‘knowledge’ he brings back reflecting his own desperate yearnings after peace, love, immutability, stability, and ordered existence. Billy comes to terms with the horrors of the war by taking his cue from the well known Eliot Rosewater, his fellow patient at a veteran’s hospital, tries to “re-invent (himself) and (his) universe”, in which reinvention “science fiction was a big help” (101). The writer Rosewater recommends to Billy is none other than Kilgore Trout, whose fanciful plots, supplemented by other outside details, help Billy to forge his illusory trip into outer space. That trip, in mythic terms, provides answers, decidedly idiosyncratic ones, to the existential problems confronting humanity.
Indeed, Joseph Campbell's distinction between myth and dream can well apply in Billy's case. Campbell defines dream as "personalized myth" and myth as "depersonalized dream", the former "quirked by the peculiar troubles of the dreamer", the latter making problems and solutions valid for all the humanity. One might fairly easily substitute madness for Campbell's dream. Here Vonnegut uses the dream and fantasy mode for Billy to escape. Billy's hallucinations become his reality, making him a permanent dreamer. Unlike the dreamer, Billy too does not leave his "personalized myth" on the personal level. Rather he depersonalizes it and tries to make it valid for every one by sharing it on a New York radio program.

I shall highlight more of Billy's hallucination and fall from primal innocence. The specific connection between the Tralfamadorian experience and the myth of Eden occurs subtly but unmistakably shortly after Billy comes "unstuck in time" during the war, he and his unwilling companion Roland Weary, are taken prisoner by a group of misfit German soldiers, one of whom, a middle-aged corporal, is wearing golden cavalry boots taken from a dead Hungarian soldier on the Russian front. By contrast, the pair of
feet next to the corporal’s is swaddled in rags, and yet the imagery surrounding the owner of those feet is comparable to the mythic references used to describe the corporal’s boots. Those feet belong to a fifteen-year-old boy whose face was that of a “blond angel” a “heavenly androgyne”. “The boy”, the narrator tells us, in a most significant analogy, “was as beautiful as Eve” (53).

Shortly before Billy’s capture, at the point where he becomes unstuck in time, the narrator says that Billy’s attention begin to swing grandly through the full arc of his life. Specifically, he considers three pleasingly passive moments: pre-birth (“red light and bubbling sounds”) being thrown into a swimming pool by his father (“there was beautiful music everywhere”), and his own death (“violet light – and a hum”).(43-44)

The common thread running through these “experiences” is Billy’s desire for inaction, passivity, semi-loss of consciousness. When he sees Adam and Eve in the golden boots, his own concerns are suddenly enlarged to include not only his own vulnerability to forces beyond his control, but all of humanity’s a condition that
represents, mythically, a fall from Adam’s and Eve’s primal innocence.

The novel narrates Billy’s delusions and extrapolations and his subsequent creation of a “solution” also suggest his awareness of the race’s inability to go backwards. Knowing that the biblical past itself is unrecoverable, therefore, he uses various materials—his longings, his readings, his experiences—to forge a world, Tralfamadore, which is futuristic to all appearances but which, in effect, carries out all the functions of the mythic world he yearns after.

It is significant that the initial linkage of space fantasy and Eden is accomplished by Vonnegut’s juxtaposing of scenes. Immediately after Billy watches his backward movie, extrapolating that the film begins / ends with Adam and Eve, he goes into the backyard to meet his Tralfamadorian kidnappers. They take him aboard their craft and introduce an anesthetic into the atmosphere so that he will sleep. When he awakens, like Adam, he finds himself in his new “Mansion” on display under a geodesic dome, the symbolic counterpart of “the uttermost convex / of this great Round” in Paradise Lost. (7. 266-267)
The beauty of Milton's Eden is such that it fills the angels who behold it with awe, a place for stunning natural loveliness and utility, where "out of the fertile ground [God] caus'd to grow/ All Trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste" (4.216-17). Billy's paradise is, likewise, a perfect place for him as a middle-class, middle-minded, twentieth-century Earthling.

Vonnegut's comic portrayal nevertheless evokes a similar sense of Billy's special place in his new environment.

This special status conferred on the otherwise pathetic Billy pilgrim is further evidenced by another parallel with Adam. Like Adam in his Naked Majesty (4.290), Billy is naked in his contrived new home (111), and wryly evoking Adam's shameless nakedness and proud majesty, Vonnegut indicates that, since the Tralfamadorians could not know that Billy's body and face were not beautiful, "they supposed that he was a splendid specimen" and "this had a pleasant effect on Billy, who began to enjoy his body for the first time" (113).
In short, Billy has found a way to make himself like the prime of men. Vonnegut presents the otherworldliness of the Tralfamadorians comically, simultaneously letting us share in Billy’s wonder and undercutting their superiority by means of absurdity. Like Milton’s angels the Tralfamadorians are far superior intellectually to their human guests. They are able to see in four dimensions, and they pity Earthlings for being able to see only in three (26). Moreover, like the intuitively reasoning angels, the Tralfamadorians communicate telepathically; and so, lacking voice boxes, they must make accommodations so that Billy can understand them. The accommodation here is “a computer and a sort of electric organ” to simulate human sounds. (76)

It is significant that Vonnegut’s portrayal of these beings relies upon machinery, in this case, twentieth-century gadgets. From the mythic perspective, which is Billy’s viewpoint, the Tralfamadorians are no more or less bizarre than the mythic shapes that people the works of Homer or Dante or Spenser.
Billy Pilgrim begins from the fallen state and expresses an overwhelming desire to move symbolically backwards, going from horrid experience into a dimension where will and action are inconsequential, where time's ravenous activity is rendered unimportant, and where human destiny is in itself insignificant. Furthermore, in forging answers to the questions "where had he come from? And where should he go now?"(124), Billy effectively "corrects" the Edenic account so that human responsibility plays no role in the present state of affairs and the inherent nature of things obviates any concern one might have for consequences.

Billy himself has no arrogant illusions except insofar as his diseased mind involuntarily makes him a form-maker. "Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future" (60); but, to a large extent, Billy's myth-making belies this statement. By making the alterations in the only place where they ultimately count — in his own mind — he eases the anxiety he hitherto felt. I agree with Vonnegut that however limited, his personal myth carries out the same function that all myths do. It gives meaning to the apparently meaningless; it provides cause for hope, it affords relief
from the otherwise horrible awareness of aging, death, decay, and meaningless sacrifice.

Vonnegut’s Billy Pilgrim reveals a lack of faith in God and, to a large extent, a lack of confidence in humanity. The only paradise that Billy can hope to inhabit is a self-generated one where there are no conflicts or tensions, where he can be absolved from the guilt’s of war without the cost of compassion, where humankind, though “no longer the image of god, the centre of the universe”, is, for that very reason, no longer responsible for the horrors of history. Billy’s solution does not answer the needs of all humanity. It is too contrived, idiosyncratic, the self-serving for that.

I hold that Vonnegut’s novels are a plea for ethical action, for the exercise of reason, for human will to be placed at the service of peace. Like all ironic fictions, Slaughterhouse Five invites the reader to look down upon the characters and even of the fiction. From a safe and superior intellectual distance, we regard Billy pilgrim as a pathetic figure, at once weak willed, passive, and victimized by both his own diseased mind and the brutal forces of politics.
Moreover, Vonnegut also allows us glimpses into Billy's internal reality—his desire for peace and love, for innocence, for stability and escape from the world's madness. These glimpses are meant to appeal to the common yearnings. Seen from that perspective, Billy Pilgrim, the Pilgrim—Every man, is indeed all of us. This duality of vision is what makes *Slaughterhouse-Five* the lurid and ludicrous tale of a lone madman and his obsessive behaviours. Like all Vonnegut’s novels, it is a plea for responsible action, for change, for the pursuit of Genesis not as a lost mythic ideal but as an attainable state of innocence.

II

Schizophrenic themes are known for their bewildering variety consisting of related psychological terms such as insanity, paranoid, neurosis etc. Schizophrenia, as it is defined—is a mental disorder characterized by many symptoms that in different combinations involve feelings, thoughts, actions and relations with the surrounding world. A schizophrenic seems to confuse fantasy with reality and to live in a private world. He often entertains false beliefs or delusions. For instance, he has hallucinations of hearing voices although nobody
is talking to him or he perceives apparitions without corresponding external objects. A schizophrenic person traditionally becomes incapable of blending feelings, thoughts, and actions in a meaningful and constructive fashion.

I shall now discuss how schizophrenia finds literary expression in Vonnegut’s novels with particular reference to Player Piano, The Sirens of Titan, Mother Night and Slaughterhouse Five.

The naive Schizophrenic—Resurrected cycle in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut is—a study of the underlying narrative structures of his novels from Player Piano to Slaughterhouse Five. The cycle is recognizable in the lives of his protagonists as well as within the overarching establishments or comic super structures. The foundations for the cycle are found within Vonnegut’s own experiences and include consideration of hyphenated lineage, suicide, technocracy, the establishment of religions and governmental authority and social—Darwinism, schizophrenia and resurrection. Vonnegut’s various views of twentieth-century man are encased within the defining moments of his life, the ‘structural moment’. His
recapitulation of form implies reliance upon his past to develop a view of the future. Beneath the science fiction and fears of the apocalypse, beyond Ice-nine, the fire-bombing of Dresden and the neutron bomb behind economic, religious and political conspiracies is Vonnegut’s vision of man trapped by biology, culture and nature. The result is a no-fault existence.

Schizophrenic elements present in the early Vonnegut’s novels deal with the ghastliness of the present age. In The Holocaust and The Literacy Imagination, Lawrence L. Langer argues that the present age is characterized by sudden gratuitous violence, terrorism, and anarchy. Death and dying, atrocity and warpedness are viewed as routine, not as exceptional. The phantasmagoric and horrific realities of recent times like the tragic political assasinations, racial violence, the political madness of Watergate, the foul brutalities of Vietnam, political fanaticism, mad religions, frequently irresponsible technology, the absence of moral absolutes and the dehumanizing theories of human behaviour—explain why Alfred Kazin’s description of contemporary fiction as a series of “apologies for abnormality,
designed to make us sympathize with the twig as it is bent the wrong way”.

While the ‘shrieks’ of madness occur with important variations in contemporary fiction, two extremes persist: that which in his essay The white Negro, Norman Mailer terms The Psychic Outlaw or Sexual Adventure, the rebel-victim con-men of J.P Donleavy and Joseph Heller, and the walking dead of Samuel Beckett and Kurt Vonnegut, dangerously withdrawn catatonic characters who lapse into complete helplessness and paralysis.

I wish to discuss here the emotionally depleted heroes of Vonnegut. They are so profoundly alienated from society and self, so utterly overwhelmed by feelings of futility and shame that they lapse into complete helplessness. Again the war-scarred, death–haunted heroes of Vonnegut are so dehumanized by anonymous bureaucracies, computers, and authoritarian institutions, and so immobilized by guilt and fear, they too turn into disembodied creatures with disintegrating mind.
It is significant to note that no characters in contemporary fiction are as traumatized and emotionally damaged than those of Kurt Vonnegut. All major protagonists suffer periods of deep depression, with periodic breakdowns, often losing touch with reality entirely and requiring psychiatric care and hospitalization. Vonnegut gives specific names to the numerous forms of mental collapse that overtake his characters like "combat fatigue", "demonic depression", "echolalia", "sexual mania", "catalepsies", "samaritrophia", "dementia", "paranoia", "catatonia" and "Hunter Thompson Disease".

To substantiate the theme I intend to analyze Vonnegut's prototypical fragmented hero, Billy Pilgrim. He is ominously familiar with psychiatrists and mental ward. He is a man with a tortured conscience, deeply repressed hostilities toward his mother and father, feelings of insignificance, and a feeble will to live. The shock of war, coupled with tragically disillusioning childhood experiences, cripple his ability to lead any kind of normal life. Vonnegut's people become automated shadows, responding only mechanically to offers of love or affection. The only womb that interests him is that which offers some
cozy hiding place—a state of blankness or indifference to anything and everything.

The words of Howard Campbell in *Mother Night* describe the dominant impulse of all Vonnegut's art: to show us "what make people go crazy" and "the different ways they go crazy". Vonnegut's interest in craziness appears primarily social and figurative in character. Insanity becomes the most graphic and compelling metaphor for a society hell-bent upon self-destruction, whose cruelty and aggression threaten to take us the way of the mastodon and megatherium.

Vonnegut's artistic purpose has been to serve his society as a "Shaman", a kind of spiritual medicine-man whose function is to expose the various forms of societal madness and dispelling the evil spirits of irresponsible mechanization and aggression while encouraging reflectiveness and the will to positive social change. It is this mystical vision that Vonnegut intends by calling himself a 'canary bird in the coal mine'---one who provides spiritual illumination, offering us warnings about the dehumanized future it surely would
become if based on the runway technology of the present. Both roles—Shaman and canary bird—meets Vonnegut’s major criterion for himself as artist—that writers are and biologically have to be agents of change.

It is on behalf of this saner world that Vonnegut directs his satirical missiles, warning us with visions of apocalyptic fury that we are a doomed species unless we learn to replace lunatic aggression and cruelty with gentleness and restraint. Distinctions between sanity and insanity, between the schizoid individual and the psychotic, are problematical. It is difficult to say when the schizoid manifestations of characters like Paul Proteus, Howard Campbell, Billy Pilgrim or Malachi Constant cross the borderline into psychosis, that is when they can no longer control their split with reality and thus become a danger to themselves and others and require care and attention in a mental hospital.

Such a symbolic moment occurs in Slaughterhouse-Five at Billy Pilgrim and Valencia’s anniversary party. Billy listens to a barbershop quartet of optometrists singing first about “sweet hearts
and pals”, which mocks Billy’s own lonely, loveless life, and then a bitter song of social injustice, with the words, “Things getting worse, driving all insane” (172). Billy experiences tortured “psychosomatic responses to the changing chords”. The world’s insane refusal to make sense makes life so unendurable for Billy that he retreats “upstairs in his nice white house” (176), which gives every appearance of being an asylum. It is now that he calls upon the consolations and the alleged wisdom of the Tralfamadorians.

Here I shall discuss the protagonist’s progress and his inclinations towards the inner shell.

Usually at the promptings of an alien, dangerously fatalistic inner voice, each of Vonnegut’s heroes crawls into a kind of Schizophrenia shell, a deliberate cultivation of a state of death-in-life existence that isolates and divides him against himself. It is in this regard that the protagonist comes by the psychic malaise described in Mother Night as that “wider separation of my several selves than even I can bear to think about”. (136). After numerous hints of such a condition have accumulated, Howard Campbell, contemplating
suicide, tells us how he has been able to cope with the world’s horrors only “through that simple and widespread boon to modern mankind—schizophrenia” (133).

I also wish to focus on the different aspects and dimensions of neurosis or insanity in all his protagonists.

In Slaughterhouse-Five, Vonnegut explains that the protagonist’s withdrawal from the real world is a “screen” or what in psychiatry is called a “mask”, a deliberately cultivated strategy of maintaining personal freedom by withdrawing behind some sort of protective shield, and putting another, false self forward.

It is no small coincidence that Billy Pilgrim should confuse a building on the ground of his Dresden prison camp with a building on Tralfamadore, that both environments should be filled with poison gas, that the prison should have sliding glass doors just as Billy’s living space on Tralfamadore is surrounded by glass, that one prison guard at both places should converse with Billy in English, that Billy should serve as an object of ridicule and entertainment for Dresdeners and Tralfamadorians alike, that similar objects should show up in both places – e.g., horse shoes, dentures—and finally that both places should come to an end by fire as a result of apocalyptic explosions.
It is the wisdom of Tralfamadore based upon the belief that human events are inevitably structured to be the way they are and hence do not lend themselves to warnings or explanations, that allows both Billy and the author to adjust to their traumatic memories of Dresden. The Tralfamadorians eventually blow up the universe while experimenting with new fuels for their flying saucers. They do not improve Billy's vision but rather ensure his Schizophrenic descent into madness. Caged in a zoo, turned to a puppet for the entertainment of mechanical creatures whose own world is both physically and morally sterile, Billy Pilgrim becomes the very embodiment of a machine. Insulted from pain, Billy simply abdicates his humanity, trading his dignity and integrity for an allusion of comfort and security, and becomes himself a machine.

Vonnegut uses the immense canvas of intergalactic space to magnify the pointlessness of human effort in any direction, as in novels like Slaughterhouse-Five or The Sirens of Titan. What is seemingly outer space is actually the tortuous, subterranean passages of the protagonist's own mind. Such fantasies are invariably the product of paranoid delusions in which the protagonist believes
himself to be guided or ruled over by voices from above—voices of hallucinated father figures, agents of doom like Bokonon, Winston Niles Rumfoord and Frank Wirtanen, who weave seductive fatalist sophistries.

In *The Sirens of Titan*, the numerous allusions to glass—portholes, windows, mirrors, crystals, and transparency to doors, caves, and tunnels show objective reality to be a mirror reflection of the nightmarish experiences occurring within the tormented mind of Malachi Constant. Such mirror reflections reinforce Vonnegut’s position that the insane world of soulless materialistic lusters for fame and money, of suicidal wars and self-serving religions, is a world of our own lunatic invention. We become our own victims by becoming entrapped and enslaved by dehumanized, mechanistic systems of control which we ourselves create.

Vonnegut warns of fate like the final loss of self, of human identity and personal freedom through another set of ominous psychic references like vivid images of petrification, destruction by fire, and death by drowning. The schizophrenic’s dread of dissolution often
manifests itself in terms of human nullification, e.g. being disembodied, emptied out of an inner self, made vacuum like, being turned into someone else's thing.

Vonnegut's characters experience this feeling of depersonalization, believing themselves "petrified" or "frozen" by dehumanizing social, militaristic, or religious machinery or by the deadliest spiral of all—their own pessimism. At various times the protagonist experiences the loss of moral identity, represented in drowning imagery, being engulfed or swallowed up. Hence, the characters see themselves "deluged", overwhelmed by "tidal waves", sucked into whirlpools or sewers.

A major disorder trait present in schizophrenic patients is the compulsion to negate immediately any positive statement the patient makes, as soon as one portion of the split psyche affirms, the other portion must contradict. This dichotomous struggle of simultaneous assertion and denial of the value of existence, in which the individual is torn between the 'yes' of the will to live and the 'no' of the will to cease, has baffled critics. In one novel after another, we witness the
sometimes despairing, sometimes hopeful efforts of Vonnegut's fragmented protagonist to put their disintegrated selves together again.

On the one hand, the protagonist's idealistic voice encourages him to maintain youthful idealisms: to nurture a drive or awareness, self-possession and moral responsibility, and to pursue dreams of a more just harmonious social order. On the other hand, the protagonist's lunatic experience breeds a potentially incapacitating despair which undermines his drive for autonomy and social reforms.

Vonnegut's first schizoid hero, Paul Proteus, appears partially successful at best in resisting the system of machines that threatens his sanity. Despite his inherent resistant to carrying out directions from above, Paul ultimately lacks the strength of will and the courage to follow a partially awakened conscience and to act against the totalitarian machinery that he himself helps to administer. As soon as his positive voice asserts itself, the pessimistic voice nullifies it, creating a kind of spiritual stalemaint. This self-neutralization of ego leaves him feeling like what he eventually becomes "an unclassified human being" (239).
The element of hope in his last name 'Proteus' signals a potential for growth realized by future heroes, each of whom becomes increasingly successful in combating defeatism, in struggling against tyrannical systems of control, and in putting his disintegrated self and world together again.

The denouement to Paul's psycho drama is still to come - not in *Player Piano* and not until the dialectical struggle between hope and despair that begins with Paul is worked out in a process of exorcism and renewal through such extensions of the Vonnegut hero as Malachi Constant, Howard Campbell, Billy Pilgrim, and Eliot Rosewater. The struggle of these later heroes should be perceived in the light of the spiritual evolution of one man - a single, fragmented psyche-seeking to overcome defeatism and to discover a faith, a course of action that will result in a more positive, creative identity.

Here I aim to analyze the schizophrenic element novel wise. Vonnegut has explicitly dealt with it. In Vonnegut's first novel *Player Piano*, he holds a sanity hearing for himself, for his characters, and for the bizarre world in which he tries to maintain a precarious
“equilibrium”. Early in Player Piano, Ed Finnerty feels something snap inside him and sits for hours with Paul’s cocked gun in his mouth. “You think I am insane? He asks Paul. Ironically Finnerty, who has begun to rebel openly against the system of machines that threatens his sanity, worries that Paul is not more shaken by the unholy mechanistic society he helps administer. Paul is less in touch with his surroundings and with himself that he or Finnerty suspects. Longing for a time when things were less impersonal and more human, he suffers frequently from depression, swigs regularly from a bottle of whiskey in his bottom desk drawer for solace, and speaks of being in need of a psychiatrist and of committing suicide.

As he contemplates his sickness, Paul lives through one of the most revealing symbolic episodes in all Vonnegut’s work. Paul befriends a small black cat. Wandering in the Ilium Works, the cat is caught and eaten by an automated sweeper. The machine spits the cat down a chute and into a freight car outside the factory. Momentarily it seems the cat will survive, but as Paul races desperately to help, the cat scrambles up the side of an electrically charged fence and with a
pop and green flash, is sent sailing high into the air, "dead and smoking, but outside" (20-21).

The omnipresent machinery of Paul's society is deadly to living things and the possibility of escaping its influence is slight. Paul's sickness, his immense depression is the result of fearing his own fate is to be as terrible and inevitable as that of the cat with which he identifies, that is, he will be gobbled up by the omnipresent emotional vacuum cleaner: the corporate personality.

It may be pointed that at one point Paul sees himself as if overwhelmed by a tidal wave, deluged, like the toy boat he watches moving toward its down in the "dark, gurgling unknown" of the sewer (253). Ironically, Paul's instinctive aversion to the pervasive mechanization of life around him, the replacement of people with machines and the mechanical behaviour of people who have just turned into machines has driven him into an emotional vacuum that is just as defeating as the misery he seeks to escape. He recognizes that any attempt at achieving an emotional life for himself is pure pretense, that shows of affection are just shows, mechanical and insincere. His
reactions to his wife are mere reflex. Anita, too, has reduced marriage to a set of mechanical conventions. And when Paul is with Finnerty, he only pretends to share the man's emotional enthusiasms, while observing that Finnerty uses words such as love and affection to describe his feelings, words Paul can never bring himself to use (87).

I intend to point out that at the novel's end, Paul observes that Lasher was the only one who had not lost touch with reality, and it was he who had been the one most out of touch, having had little time for reflection and so "eager to join a large, confident organization with seeming answers to the problems that had made him sorry to be alive" (314). So by Paul's own admission at the book's beginning, he is more insane than not, "disembodied, an insubstantial wisp, nothingness, a man who declined to be any more" (134).

While the outer revolution in Player Piano is as doomed as Paul's cat, culminating in a blind orgy of indiscriminate wreckage and the inclination to put the same old system back together again. There are hints that Paul may yet be able with the proper awareness and courage, to put his distinguished self and world together again. The

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most beautiful peonies he ever saw were grown in "almost pure cat excrement"(300). Paul displays a capacity for embracing life's ambiguities, for exploring his shadowy inner world, and thus realizes the potential for change and growth implicit in his last name "Proteus".

In my analysis of Vonnegut's next novel, The Sirens of Titan, I maintain the same method of insanity study with fantasy and puzzle boxes.

The action of the novel takes place at a time when "men did not know that the meaning of life was within themselves...mankind, ignorant of the truths that lie within every human being, looked outward"(7). They left inwardness unexplored while giving them over to mad delusion that the quest for material acquisitions for money, power and fame was the path to salvation. This explains Vonnegut's essential use of fantasy in Sirens to intensify our awareness of the madness of our present lives from a futuristic perspective, while preparing us for a world that might be if we learn to solve the puzzle boxes within ourselves. A foresight into the uncharted terrain and
bizarre flight patterns of the mind of Malachi Constant, who only seems to travel to Mars, Mercury, Titan via a supernatural force called the *UWTB*, to be caught in a super terrestrial phenomenon called “chrono-synclastic infundibula”, and to encounter various space monsters, “hideous …and uniformly cataclysmic”(5,6).

If Malachi is to overcome the insanity that threatens him at the novel’s opening, his challenge is to learn to direct such inward journeys himself. It is significant to note that Vonnegut’s fantasy vision in this novel comes in the form of parallel to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice-in-Wonderland*. Carroll sends Alice down a rabbit hole to the center of the earth while Vonnegut sends Malachi Constant into outer space, the flights of imagination with highly dangerous consequences.

*Sirens* are more the story of Malachi’s growth, of his adoption of awareness and courage and his quest for psychic wholeness. He realizes that the world of chaos and brutality he enters is a projection of his spiritual potential for creating a heaven or a hell of life on earth. Like all Vonnegut’s protagonists, Malachi holds the *Alice-in-Wonderland* key to the doors of bedlam inside his own mind. He
learns that with a little imagination and heart, he can, like the perfect
machine Salò, dismantle his self-imprisoning machinery and
reconstitute his being.

It may be pointed out that by using imagery and illusions
Vonnegut highlights the fantasy world. The Rumfoord door, the caves
of Mercury, where Malachi thinks he sees buildings where his jailers
and masters of all creation live, but legless furniture floating in the air
in both sets of building shows that these dumb, cold crystals reflect
Malachi’s memory of Magnum Opus again. The seeds of all
Malachi’s illusion are present in his very real, very insane earthling
environment.

Late in the novel, on Titan, when Malachi hears the voices of
others coming back to him as his own echo (291), we appreciate the
metaphorical and psychological content of his experience. These
“echos” in Sirens are of a mind increasingly paranoid and seeking to
hide in self-imprisoning fantasies of comfort and protection. His
withdrawal is a natural reaction to very real terrors from which he
does well to shrink.
It may be stated that as with Paul Proteus in *Player Piano*, Vonnegut’s hero at the beginning of *Sirens of Titan* is in deep emotional trouble. His life is a nightmare of void and meaninglessness.

I wish to discuss here how the degeneracy of personal life is reflected in his protagonists and the modes of escape they seek in order to escape from the worst form of Schizophrenia. The guilt and emotional void in Malachi’s life has a deeper source than his disgust with corporate machinery. The degeneracy of his personal life is more a symptom than the cause of his unhappiness. It is Malachi’s obvious need for parental love and guidance that causes him to hallucinate a surrogate father figure like Niles Rumfoord who is going to tell him exactly what to do, and an escapist, mind-numbering philosophy in which he is promised entrance into a paradise of perfect peace, beauty and understanding.

It is significant that the central problem of Malachi’s life had been to win the love of his wife and child, probably because he had come from a shattered family. Cruelly unloving parents leave Constant so withdrawn that “hallucinations”, usually drug-induced,
were all that would surprise or entertain him anymore (19). Rather than preparing him for paradise and moving him closer to the life of dignity and purpose for which he feels his name has destined him, Malachi’s space adventures have been exercises in madness—an escape into lovelessness and brutality.

The worst form of schizophrenic experience that troubled him is that in believing he is the helpless pawn of fate, wired like a robot and aimed into space by Rumfoord, he allows himself to be fragmented into robot-like identities that distort and threaten the loss of his true self. It appears that madness claims Malachi in the end. He dies under the post-hypnotic illusion given him by Salo that he sees his best friend, Stony Stenvenson, again and that a golden spaceship encrusted with diamonds carries him happily off to paradise.

The overriding truth of this novel is that nearly everything Malachi has done has been done “in his head”. The product of that drug-induced hallucination by which he enters the “Alice-in-wonderland door” to the Rumfoord estate is a microcosm of his own mind.
In my next novel of study, Mother Night, I wish to focus how Vonnegut attempts to work out the schizophrenic dilemma which Howard Campbell calls “that wider separation of my several selves that even I can bear to think about” (136). Campbell speaks of echoing “the soul’s condition in a man at war” (117) in a monstrous picture he has drawn, he implicates the soul of his creator as well.

It is significant that Vonnegut not only presents what he had experienced first hand, the insane bigotry and paranoia behind the Nazi’s persecution of the Jews, but as an American prisoner of war he had been forced to witness the largest massacre in European history—or at least its immediate aftermath.

His protagonist Campbell finds himself confronted with a world in which overwhelming madness, some perverted or pathological state of mind, is viewed as the norm rather than the exception. In a period of insanity among “nations of lunatics”, Campbell’s friend and Pingpong partner, Heinz Schildknecht tells him, “All people are insane” (90). The horrors Campbell encounters during the war stretch all the way back to childhood. His father had
kept books of World War I with "pictures of men hung on barbed wire, mutilated women, bodies stretched like accordions—all the usual furniture of world wars" (31). His mother, his principal companion until he turns ten, was a "morbid" person who drank most of the time and was preoccupied with death. Campbell encountered other pitiful examples of machine dehumanization in his sister-in-law, Resi Noth, and in the maniacal super patriot Bernard O'Hare, a dispatcher of frozen-custard trucks who, according to Campbell, felt just as pointless about his life as poor Resi did at her cigarette-making machine in Dresden. (70)

It is during Campbell's final confrontation with O'Hare, the man Campbell says "thought of himself as St. George and me as the dragon" (177). Vonnegut leads us to see the kind of idiocy that motivates patriotic lunatics like Jones and O'Hare. Having convinced that it has been his mission from birth to overcome pure evil in the world by destroying Campbell, O'Hare tells Campbell, "It's in the stars...you realize you are being aimed right straight at something...and neither one of us could have avoided it if we'd tried" (178-182).
Indeed, the totalitarian mind is explicitly schizophrenic, formed by paranoia, a repressed libido, and operating in accord with its own bizarre sense of reality and time. There is no doubt that some of Campbell's missing moral teeth—those that have allowed him to survive by evading the truth about his own crimes against humanity—are the world's doing and not his own.

Frank Wirtanen is correct when he indicates that the lifelong process of dehumanization has turned Campbell into the lifeless, willless, moribund creature described as "pretty much out of your control" (150). Campbell's paralysis is enforced by the same fatalism that besets Paul Proteus and Malachi Constant. It is a pose that renders him one of "those bland, pleasing, easily manipulated playthings", he condemns in children's toys (60). There is evidence that Campbell had become what he pretended to be—signaling the novel's moral that comes in his invention of The Free American Corps a Nazi "daydream". Campbell understands that he has paid a dear price for his moral and political idiocy in the form of tragic alienation and schizophrenic splitting. It is his ultimate willingness to confront the consequences of his previous moral blindness that proves his
salvation, through his confessions that bring him face to face with the homicidal maniac within.

Thus, Vonnegut attempts to make possible his own rebirth through his protagonists. His own deep war experiences and scars effectively merge with his protagonist Billy Pilgrim to find purgation. From *Player Piano* to *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut describes the "collisions" of people and machinery without apparent resolution. It is an expression of the author's own state of mind as he attempts to work out the schizophrenic dilemma of his major characters. A striking paradox of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is that it presents us with Vonnegut's most completely demoralized protagonist.

Billy Pilgrim becomes Vonnegut's scapegoat, carrying the author's heaviest burden of trauma and despair, but his sacrifice makes possible Vonnegut's own "rebirth". Billy Pilgrim's conversion to Tralfamadorian fatalism, OR FATAL DREAM, which is Tralfamadore by anagram, assures his schizophrenic descent into madness. He uses fantasy not to reconstruct his own robotic personality, but to escape the present. Billy Pilgrim's gentleness and
subsequent refusal to participate in the world's destructiveness elicits our sympathy.

Moreover, the horrors of Dresden, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Nazi concentration camp focus the panorama of violence and inhumanity that defines Pilgrim's world. The slaughter house where Billy is kept as a prisoner in Dresden becomes more than a grotesque naturalistic image of human beings dehumanized by war, hanging like butchered animals on hooks. It becomes an all-encompassing metaphor for human existence in which suffering and death are commonplace. If one counts deaths that are predicted or imagined as well as those that occur, there may be a greater proliferation of corpses in Slaughterhouse-Five than in any other twentieth-century novel.

We encounter death by starvation, rotting, incineration, and squashing, gassing, shooting, poisoning, bombing, torturing, hanging and relatively routine death by disease. Vonnegut's omnipresent 'clock' effectively merges Billy's childhood nightmare with that of his war experience - "the greatest massacre in European history,
which was the fire-bombing of Dresden" (101). Nothing really prepares Billy Pilgrim for the momentous horrors of Dresden and the unimaginable displays of human cruelty and in justice offered by the war. After Billy is sent overseas he develops a vivid sense of the monstrous torture instruments, the killing machines of war that tear and mutilate the body and create such sadistic creatures as the revenge-crazed Paul Lazzaro, who carries a list in his head of people he is going to have killed after the war (140). In Billy’s mind, war has converted the creative potency of God Almighty, along with his own, to aggression and death.

Here I wish to emphasize on the wreaking memories which slowly lead Billy towards insanity. Billy’s prisoner-of-war experience becomes an “acrimonious madrigal” (79), a nightmare of victimization and madness. He and everyone around him exhibit some form of insane, mechanically conditioned behaviour, that which is overtly aggressive. Billy himself looks like a “broken kite” (97). Billy’s absorption in the prison-camp production of Cinderella confirms his schizophrenic deterioration. He can only relate only to
imaginary scenes and people. "Theatrical grief" (125) becomes more real to him than anything in the outside world.

In reality, it is the more subtle, spiritually corrosive effects of technological progress that destroy Billy's equilibrium for good. Surrounded by the soulless junk of middle-class suburbia and saddled with an inane wife who can't believe any one has married her, Billy leads a sterile, machine-ridden life. Billy lives in an all-electric home, sleeps in a bed with Magic Fingers (62), owns a fifth of a Holiday Inn, and half of three Tastee-Freeze Stands (61). Not only has Billy's mechanical world despiritualized his environment and traumatized him with its awesome power for physical destruction, it has depleted his imagination and his will to something better than a machine himself. Billy pilgrim learns to experience death as merely a 'violet light and a 'hum' (43), whether it is the horrors of the Dresden holocaust or the nightmare of Billy's vapid civilian life at home with a fat and inane wife.

What finally destroys Billy's equilibrium is the irreconcilable contrast in his life between an ideal world of beauty, justice, mercy,
and peace, and that of the psychologically devastating accumulation of horrors that turn him into a dazed and disembodied scarecrow. This principle of ironic contrast separates Billy from his sanity inducing the state of "catalepsis". Life, with its torturous vacillation between sweet and sour, sublimity and pathos, has become so unendurable for Billy that he becomes stuporous, his actions somnambulistic, and in an act of total disengagement, he retreats "upstairs in his nice white house" (176), which gives every appearance of being an asylum.

It is significant to note that Billy's regress is Vonnegut's progress. Not only has Vonnegut shored up his own sanity by facing directly into the fires of Dresden, making his long deferred "dance with death", without which he says no art is possible (21), but like Lot's wife he has asserted his inviolable humanity and freed himself from the self-imprisoning fatalism of Tralfamadore.

Thus, Vonnegut knows that the Tralfamadorians are merely ourselves. It is an appropriate symbol for the mechanistic insanity of our own planet, an extension into the future of our own warlike globe. He knows too that with sufficient imagination and heart, we can, like
Salo in Sirens of Titan, dismantle our own self-imprisoning machinery and become whatever we choose to become.