ALEXANDER HEATH
2008 MEETING OF THE MINDS CONFERENCE
THESIS ABSTRACT:

“Humanisms in Kurt Vonnegut”

The literature of American author Kurt Vonnegut, from the idyllic society of 1950s post-war America in his earliest unpublished stories to his ultimate confrontation with an America run by “sickies” in 2005’s *A Man Without a Country*, displays remarkable philosophical consistency which embodies Vonnegut’s unique Humanism. A middle-class mentality helps define Vonnegut’s emphasis on the importance of human compassion and common decency, his career’s most consistent and recurring theme.

In this thesis, “Humanisms in Kurt Vonnegut,” I discuss many of Vonnegut’s unpublished short stories made available through the Kurt Vonnegut Collection at Indiana University’s Lilly Library in Bloomington, IN. With the aid of a Florida State University Bess H. Ward Honors Thesis Grant, I traveled in October of 2007 to research for a week these important unpublished documents. At the Lilly Library I studied nearly one hundred unpublished stories for the purpose of examining Vonnegut’s early elements of Humanism and situating these stories within the larger context of Vonnegut’s published work. The thesis is composed of four chapters which focus on American 1950s culture, World War Two, science-fiction, the notion of “progress,” Post-Humanism, and evolution.

KEY WORDS:
Kurt Vonnegut
Humanism
American Literature
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

HUMANISMS IN KURT VONNEGUT

By

ALEXANDER HEATH

A Thesis submitted to the
Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Major

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2008

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Alexander Heath defended on April 7, 2008.
Dennis Moore  
Thesis Director

Birgit Maier-Katkin  
Outside Committee Member

Timothy Parrish  
Committee Member

Amitabh Rai  
Committee Member
Alexander Heath

“Humanisms in Kurt Vonnegut”

The literature of American author Kurt Vonnegut, from the idyllic society of 1950s post-war America in his earliest unpublished stories to his ultimate confrontation with an America run by “sickies” in 2005’s *A Man Without a Country*, displays remarkable philosophical consistency which embodies Vonnegut’s unique Humanism. A middle-class mentality helps define Vonnegut’s emphasis on the importance of human compassion and common decency, his career’s most consistent and recurring theme.

In this thesis, “Humanisms in Kurt Vonnegut,” I discuss many of Vonnegut’s unpublished short stories made available through the Kurt Vonnegut Collection at Indiana University’s Lilly Library in Bloomington, IN. With the aid of a Florida State University Bess H. Ward Honors Thesis Grant, I traveled in October of 2007 to research for a week these important unpublished documents.

At the Lilly Library I studied nearly one hundred unpublished stories for the purpose of examining Vonnegut’s early elements of Humanism and situating these stories within the larger context of Vonnegut’s published work. The thesis is composed of four chapters which focus on American 1950s culture, World War Two, science-fiction, the notion of “progress,” Post-Humanism, and evolution.
This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Kurt Vonnegut.
Acknowledgements:

In this thesis, I had the assistance of an excellent committee; all four members were especially qualified to guide this project to a fruitful conclusion. Those members are Dr. Dennis Moore (director), Dr. Birgit Maier-Katkin, Dr. Timothy Parrish, and Dr. Amit Rai. Dr. Maier-Katkin, an associate professor of German literature and culture, who helped me analyze the ways in which Vonnegut’s German heritage affected his view of the world. Dr. Parrish, with expertise in post-World War II American literature, is a crucial contributor to a Vonnegut thesis. Dr. Rai, who last semester taught my Senior Honors seminar “What is Cyberpunk?” contributed to a greater understanding of the Cyberpunk and Post-Human elements in my thesis. I have continued a dialogue with Dr. Moore, an associate professor of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture, since my first semester at FSU in which he taught an early-American authors course which I excelled in; he has since been a highly influential mentor throughout my subsequent five semesters. I extend special thanks Dr. Moore for encouraging me to pursue Vonnegut in my thesis; his generous guidance allowed me to quickly transition from an enthusiastic Vonnegut fan to a serious Vonnegut scholar. I would also like to thank Florida State University and its Honors Program for giving me the opportunity to pursue my research with the help of a generous Bess H. Ward Honors Thesis Grant; William Oldson, founder and director Florida State’s Institute on War and the Human Experience, for his encouraging words; the kind staff of the Lilly Library for their instrumental assistance in the completion of this thesis; my lovely girlfriend for tolerating my grueling work schedule while encouraging and inspiring me to continue; my family and friends for their love and for supporting me in whatever I choose to do; and my high school English teacher Alex Dasher, for introducing me to Vonnegut in the first place.
Table of Contents:

Introduction:
Pluralisms in Kurt Vonnegut 1

Chapter One:
Vonnegut and American Culture in the 1950s 8

Chapter Two:
Struggling to Deal with World War II 20

Chapter Three:
Science Fiction and the Hypnotic Power of Progress 28

Chapter Four:
How Kurt Vonnegut’s Humanism Paradoxically Paved the Way for Post-Humanism 35

Conclusion:
Vonnegut in the Future 45

Works Cited 50
Introduction: 
Pluralisms in Kurt Vonnegut

In 1973, Jerome Klinkowitz published the first major collection of Vonnegut scholarship, *The Vonnegut Statement*, and included in it his essay “Why They Read Vonnegut.” Here he discusses Kurt Vonnegut’s early short stories for popular 1950s magazines such as *Collier’s, The Saturday Evening Post, Playboy*, and *The Ladies’ Home Journal*. Several of these stories (“Custom-made Bride,” “The Package,” “Hal Irwin’s Magic Lamp,” “Poor Little Rich Town,” “Runaways,” and “Bagombo Snuff Box”) had not yet been collected; twenty-three years later Peter Reed would compile all of these magazine shorts, along with eighteen others, into the collection titled *Bagombo Snuff Box*.

Klinkowitz describes these stories not to discuss their fluctuating quality, but in order to establish that “Vonnegut wrote these stories, dozens of them, from a consistently middle-class point of view” (22), effectively arguing that “the middle-class slant is not simply a requirement of the form; if we look at Vonnegut’s nonfictional work, we will see that it is an integral part of his expression” (23). This middle-class mentality helps define Vonnegut’s emphasis on the importance of human compassion and common decency, his career’s most consistent and recurring theme.

In this thesis, *Humanisms in Kurt Vonnegut*, like Klinkowitz in 1973, I will discuss some of Vonnegut’s as-yet-uncollected stories with the intention of emphasizing the Humanism, such an integral aspect of Vonnegut’s persona. But while Klinkowitz reviewed work that had never been collected, I will examine Vonnegut’s works which have never been published in any capacity, materials I have been able to read and study at the Kurt Vonnegut Collection at Indiana University’s Lilly Library. Located in Bloomington, just an hour south of Vonnegut’s hometown Indianapolis, the esteemed collections of the Lilly were the logical place for Vonnegut to keep his undiscovered works safely close to his beloved hometown.

With the aid of a Florida State University Bess H. Ward Honors Thesis Grant, I traveled in October of 2007 to immerse myself for a week in the manuscripts of the Kurt Vonnegut collection. Although I arrived with no specific agenda regarding the materials which I would study, the collection’s 100+ unpublished short stories quickly drew my
attention. Many of these works remain unfinished; when examining these time-worn typescripts, one can feel the frustration of an aspiring author banging at typewriter keys and turning out pages in between family life and an unsatisfying day job. Vonnegut’s tireless attempts to establish himself as an author ably demonstrate the middle-class working mentality which always remained central to his work.

In addition, Vonnegut also consistently represents an American Midwest mentality. Vonnegut contributed an original essay titled “Coda to my Career as a Writer for Periodicals,” to the collection Bagombo Snuff Box; tellingly, in this piece from the late 1990s, Vonnegut primarily discusses his Midwestern heritage, rather than the short stories which constitute the rest of this book. Vonnegut’s roots in Indianapolis go all the way back to the “vast migration of Germans to the Midwest in the half century from 1820 to 1870” (Palm 21). The early Vonneguts, “better educated and of higher social rank than the mine-run of immigrants” (Palm 21) became a distinguished and influential clan within the rapidly developing city, most visibly through a prominent hardware store bearing the family’s name.

Vonnegut’s Humanistic principles undoubtedly stem from the humane values of his German ancestors, particularly Clemens Vonnegut, Sr. Founder of the Vonnegut Hardware Company, Clemens also served for twenty-seven years on the Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis. The philosophical views of Clemens, an Atheistic Free Thinker and an admirer of Voltaire, were hugely influential on Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., but he abandoned the German culture which his ancestors had brought with them. Referring to his ancestral religion, or lack thereof, Vonnegut writes,

How it was passed on to me is a mystery. By the time I got to know them, my parents were both so woozy with Welttschmerz that they weren’t passing anything on—not the German language, not their love for German music, not the family history, nothing” (Palm 177).

Somehow the Atheistic philosophical principles of Clemens Sr. reached Kurt Vonnegut Junior even through many generations, although Vonnegut, well into his career as a professional free thinker and moralist, was not aware of these until a distant relative presented him with a detailed family history. This text affected Vonnegut so thoroughly that he published it in Palm Sunday, a collection of personal essays.
But young Vonnegut, lost in the “quiet burial of a culture” following widespread anti-German sentiments in the United States during World War One, was never able to embrace his German heritage. World War Two only heightened American apprehension of German culture; as a child, Kurt Vonnegut Junior could only embrace his own culture. American culture is omnipresent in Vonnegut’s work, from early unpublished short stories to late direct commentaries upon modern American culture written in the voice of the author himself. Kurt Vonnegut is, at his core, an American writer; his literature is, undeniably, American literature.

Kurt Vonnegut Junior’s earliest relatives provided his moral and philosophical foundations; later relatives, more actively involved in the arts, provided Vonnegut with enough artistic heritage to make him a stylistically groundbreaking writer. The unfavorable conditions for artists during the Great Depression, however, almost stopped Vonnegut from becoming any kind of artist. His father, Kurt Vonnegut Senior, was a respected and talented architect who enjoyed professional success until the financial ruin of the 1930s. The family’s devastation included having to sell the exquisite Indianapolis home which Kurt Vonnegut Sr. had designed himself. The economic stress led Vonnegut Sr. to discourage his children from following in his own footsteps as an artist. Vonnegut Jr. writes,

> My father, who was a painter and an architect, was so hurt by the Depression, when he was unable to make a living, that he thought I should have nothing to do with the arts. He warned me to stay away from the arts because he had found them so useless as a way of producing money” (A Man, 15).

Although Vonnegut Jr. followed his father’s advice and studied chemistry as an undergraduate at Cornell University, he would spend the majority of his life as an author highly dedicated to the arts. Studying science landed Vonnegut a respectable job as a public relations writer for General Electric, but this job could not erase the haunting shadow of the Depression. In many of his novels, Vonnegut expresses concern for the divisive effects of money on American lives, from bitter condemnations of corporate greed in the early God Bless You Mr. Rosewater to mourning the loss of American jobs to imported labor in the late Hocus Pocus. We can see the Depression’s traumatizing long-term effects even more clearly in Vonnegut’s published and unpublished short stories, in
which the need for money is often a primary concern. These stories, most of which he wrote shortly after the conclusion of World War Two, display the young writer grappling with economic woes he and his country had only recently resolved and uncertain of maintaining stability. Although popular culture watermarks such as television shows *Leave it to Beaver* in the 1960s, and *Happy Days* in the 1970s, idealized the 50s as a period of American innocence in which the domestic values of the nuclear family reigned supreme, Vonnegut demonstrates—in published stories such as “The Foster Portfolio,” “Any Reasonable Offer,” and “Poor Little Rich Town”—a troubled uncertainty about economic stability. This theme is even more visible in the unpublished stories such as “Four Utterly Honest People,” “The Epizootic,” “Beeline, Inc.,” “Land of Opportunity,” and “Money Talks;” I discuss these stories and others within the larger context of popular American 1950s culture in the first chapter of this thesis, “Vonnegut and American Culture in the 1950s.”

While serving as an Army infantryman in World War Two, Vonnegut and his entire company were taken as prisoners of war in Dresden, Germany during the Battle of the Bulge. While still held captive, Vonnegut experienced the American bombing of Dresden firsthand from an abandoned slaughterhouse converted into a makeshift bomb shelter. When the fiery destruction ceased, the Germans put Vonnegut and the other prisoners to work exhuming corpses from the wreckage. Naturally, when Vonnegut returned to peacetime America, the financial and cultural concerns which I discuss in my first chapter were not the only subjects on his mind; a large portion of his unpublished writing consists of early attempts to placate the trauma of wartime horrors. I devote the second chapter in this thesis to Vonnegut’s numerous and varied attempts to describe his military experience which culminate with his 1969 masterwork, *Slaughterhouse-Five*; Vonnegut would eloquently state in this novel, “there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre” (19), after nearly twenty years of struggling to do just that.

Although writing was at first a late-night and weekend pursuit for Vonnegut in time off from his day job at G.E., observing the scientific developments in his workplace profoundly inspired Vonnegut; he soon made recurring themes of ethical scientific concerns, the troubling notion of G.E’s much-touted belief in “progress,” and the widespread economic struggles which accompany such dynamic scientific research. After
enjoying minor success in the magazine business, Vonnegut began working on his first novel, *Player Piano*, which skillfully combines all three of these themes. My thesis’s third chapter, “Science Fiction and the Hypnotic Power of Progress,” explores Vonnegut’s distrust for the notion of “progress” in conjunction with his interesting takes on science fiction. Throughout his lifetime, Vonnegut stayed abreast of the latest scientific developments and consistently discussed them in his writing and public speeches.

Vonnegut found scientific theories of evolution particularly captivating in the latter half of his writing career. While Vonnegut reveals a long-term interest in the probable or improbable outcomes of human evolution in early published stories such as “Unready to Wear,” in which humans have evolved into amphibian-like creatures, he openly engages in the scientific and cultural discourse on evolution in his 1985 novel *Galapagos*. In this fable, Vonnegut portrays a world in which, a million years after an apocalyptic 1986 A.D, humans have evolved into furry seal-like creatures with small brains. Vonnegut expresses ambivalence about evolutionary progress, marking both the positive and negative aspects a reduction in human intelligence—in this way, Vonnegut continued to question the notion of “progress” instilled by G.E., but within the heightened stakes of the heated battle of evolutionary theories between atheistic Darwinisms and fundamentalist religious beliefs. In my fourth chapter, “How Kurt Vonnegut’s Humanism Paradoxically Paved the Way for Posthumanism,” I demonstrate that Vonnegut remained culturally relevant through his foundational work in science fiction in conjunction with his later endeavors into evolutionary theory, and also helped define two segments of his literary successors: the authors who defined the 1980s genre “Cyberpunk,” as well as theorists such as Ihab Hasan, Donna Haraway, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari who first dealt with futuristic notions of “Posthumanism.” Although Vonnegut’s lifelong commitment to Humanism seems to imply a disconnection with the arbitrarily notion of a “post-Humanism,” this is actually not the case; I argue that Posthumanism is a continuation of Vonnegut’s commitment to compassionate behavior, which has its roots in Vonnegut’s first German immigrant ancestors.

Over a century later, the city of Indianapolis still takes great pride in one of its first families, most significantly the Midwestern author who reshaped the landscape of
American literature; Indianapolis declared 2007 the year of Kurt Vonnegut. That year the Lilly Library prepared a Vonnegut exhibition titled “Mustard Gas and Roses,” lovingly curated by four undergraduate students. Unfortunately, Vonnegut never made it to the exhibition. On April 11, 2007, he passed away, only a month and a week before the exhibition’s debut. Vonnegut “had anticipated the exhibition with what seemed special pleasure” (Mitchell 5). No stranger to the Lilly Library, he had been contributing his personal documents for a decade; Vonnegut transferred the bulk of his manuscripts and letters to the library in 1997, and continued to personally send further letters and packages until his death. Breon Mitchell, the director of the Lilly Library, writes, “On many occasions he would follow up with a phone call to see if the material had arrived safely, and to ask, sometimes incredulously, if we really wanted them” (5).

The tragic timing of the exhibition’s opening only strengthened its emotional resonance. One display, composed entirely of magazines’ rejection slips, showcased Vonnegut’s determination to continue writing. Another display, which featured nine separate rough drafts of Slaughterhouse-Five’s first chapter, highlights Vonnegut’s commitment to his craft. Viewed as a whole, the contents of the Kurt Vonnegut Collection at the Lilly Library vividly illustrate the life of one of America’s greatest modern artists. A better understanding of the author’s work can be achieved by exploring his manuscripts and personal papers; Jonathan R. Eller writes that the Collection “invites further study of the sometimes elusive truths that lie at the heart of Vonnegut’s America” (12).

In this thesis I accept Eller’s invitation, juxtaposing Vonnegut’s early unpublished work with his full catalog of published literature to explore his lifelong interaction with American culture. Vonnegut’s literature, particularly the wildly popular Slaughterhouse-Five, demonstrates the author’s power not only to remark upon, but to change the face of his culture. The force of Vonnegut’s words will not diminish with time, but will grow stronger, much like the work of his most direct literary predecessors, Voltaire and Twain. During a war often touted as “the next Vietnam,” Vonnegut, whose voice defined that decade’s counterculture and helped lead to the resolution of that unfortunate period in American history, is sorely missed. But even without its author, Vonnegut’s writing is as relevant today as ever. Rather than falling victim to cultural fads, political biases, or
dated references, Vonnegut always began with a timeless and unwavering commitment to kindness; rather than disappearing over time, Vonnegut will light the way for generations to come.
Chapter One:  
Vonnegut and American Culture in the 1950s

If Kurt Vonnegut had been a child in the 1950s, things would have been different. Instead, as a young businessman just back from the horrors of World War II trying to support a family in the fifties, Kurt Vonnegut was attempting to cope with a new and alien American culture. As a professional writer of short stories for magazines, Vonnegut consciously wrote for a particular demographic: “Here he would write stories on more typically domestic issues . . . Matters of corporate science and sociology would figure in some of these works, but the emphasis was on life as lived by average Americans, just the people who were reading these magazines,” which, “by story’s end resolved in a way that reaffirmed the middle-class values underwriting both subscriptions and advertising sales” (Effect 20).

One might assume that Vonnegut’s fifties fiction for popular magazines shared the clear-cut social values which television introduced to the social consciousness, but in actuality, the astronomically rising popularity of television’s vapid morals and reductive conclusions inarguably delivered a fatal blow to the entire short story industry, and thus to Vonnegut’s primary income at that time. Appropriately, when these changes force Vonnegut into relying solely on novels at this point, his spirits are pointedly less hopeful, the developing voice of a middle-class family man who has had his successful business shut down by a wildly popular hypnotizing device.

Even within these compromises for the magazines, however, Vonnegut’s essential Humanism is clearly visible even in his earliest short stories. Having experienced tragic events in the 1940s that would haunt the rest of his life and writing, Vonnegut treats fifties culture with a measure of skepticism, plumbing for the seedy undertones within the popular fifties culture for which he was writing. According to Vonnegut, he had been a “public pessimist ever since learning about the fate of Hiroshima and Nagasake” (Effect 67). As a pessimist, then, Vonnegut would find many easy targets within the hopelessly idealistic popular culture of fifties America.

His willingness to explore culture beyond its surface value comes from his genealogy, as “a Midwesterner with a heritage of German-American Freethinkers . . .” (Rackstraw 53) and especially his experience as an anthropologist. Vonnegut’s fondest
memories come from his childhood: “One of his favorite lines in interviews and essays was that he had learned all of his presumed radicalism in high school civics classes taught with the full approval of the board of education in Indianapolis, Indiana, in the heart of the country during the 1930s” (Effect 176).

Although Vonnegut’s free-thinking roots are always visible in his writing, his perspective as middle-class Midwesterner is the most frequent viewpoint of his stories. Klinkowitz adds, “Vonnegut wrote these stories, dozens of them, from a consistently middle-class point of view. This point of view is often their best asset, offering Vonnegut some of his strongest plots, clearest themes, and funniest lines. The middle-class slant is not simply a requirement of the form; if we look at Vonnegut’s nonfictional work, we will see that it is an integral part of his expression” (Statement 22-23). A middle-class mentality likely will embody a Humanist adherence to “common decency” which would become a defining characteristic of Vonnegut’s writing.

Vonnegut’s short stories most closely resemble his magazine short stories in style. We can apply a formula for a convenient conclusion to many of Vonnegut’s early stories. These stories are often patterned by the formula of simple misunderstanding which creates unexpected and problematic results. Jerome Klinkowitz has suggested that the source of this formula is the characters themselves:

“To the eye of this humanist, people are the most interesting subject, and underlying his vision is the theme that people are likely to act in predictable ways—often charmingly so, with a winsome innocence the author encourages his readers to appreciate, but predictable all the same. The art of his work consists in how far he can stretch the occasion to make this predictability serve as a clever solution to the story’s problem, as an insight into the nature of the characters involved—in other words, as a surprise” (Effect 25).

Vonnegut’s published stories best represented his ability to balance between an adherence to the standard rules of the magazines and a scrutinizing eye towards the darker recesses of his culture. His unpublished works reveal experiments in which he often sways too far one way or the other: completely embracing the glamorized image of the fifties, or rejecting this cultural myth in subversively bleak tales.
A few of Vonnegut’s unpublished stories contain the kind of overly sentimental moments which characterize the idealized culture of 1950s America. In “The Honor of a Newsboy,” Vonnegut tells the tale of Earl Hedlund, accused of beating to death Estelle Fulmer—“the Jezebel waitress.” Police chief Charley Howes attempts to solve the murder; along the way he encounters a chipper newsboy named Mark. Vonnegut writes, the serious way Mark talked about the rule [delivering papers for six days even if they start piling up] reminded Charley what a marvelous age ten was. And Charley thought it was a pity that everybody couldn’t stay ten for the rest of their lives. If everybody were ten, Charley thought, maybe rules and common decency and horse sense would have a Chinaman’s chance.

Even if one ignores Vonnegut’s uncharacteristic use of the derisive phrase “Chinaman’s chance,” the young author still falls victim in this early attempt to the sappy sentiment of fifties culture.

In the innocently depicted society of the 50s, the high school matches the home in terms of predictable domestic situational comedy. Repeatedly, “Daily life as a measure of judgment pervades Vonnegut’s work. High school, big and small business, are frequent standards: so is family life” (Statement 24). George Helmholtz, the bumbling yet good-intentioned band director of later stories such as “The Kid Nobody Could Handle,” is already a fixture in Vonnegut’s short fiction. In an unpublished story titled “The Genius Club,” Helmholtz serves instead as a self-consciously plump high school principal. Helmholtz finds out that there is an unregistered student group whose title the story bears. It seems that all of the school’s students have learned their IQs from secret files held by the school, and that they are demanding to be placed in classes accordingly. The reader discovers, though, that the girl who discovered the files and revealed them to the students misread the data and told the students their weights, rather than their IQs, making the Genius Club only a group of the school’s largest students.

By forgoing any insightful moral points, Vonnegut most strictly adheres to the unquestioning spirit of the fifties. In the same way that the high school represents a setting beyond reproach, some of Vonnegut’s unpublished stories also enforce similarly unchallenged gender roles of the fifties. In “Slice of Life” (1957), the story’s protagonist, Rose, has “the miraculous ability to love without reason.” Rose is kidnapped by a mad
scientist who intends to create children for himself from the collected DNA of his university’s most respected scholars. His first two experiments in this venture, however, turn out as dimwitted children. Rose uses her ability to love on these children, and after understanding the scientist’s misguided intentions, she agrees to take care of all three. Although this attention is the sort of unconditional caring which characterizes Vonnegut’s Humanist perspectives, the clear interpretation of Rose as stupid and matronly does not. Rose is the all-American girl, whose ultimate purpose is to take on a matriarchal role. Although in this story Rose exhibits the unconditional compassion characteristic of Humanism, Vonnegut disappointingly conflates this compassion with a stereotypical portrayal as a moronic young female, “majoring in marriage,” in college.

Another story follows the same kind of plot, with similar characters. In “FUBAR” (1959), Fuzz Littler works for G&F in public relations at the Ilium Works. He is unhappy and generally useless to the company, displaced into a far-away office underneath the gym. He is “fubar” (fouled-up beyond all recognition) for his unfortunate circumstances at work and his life which consists only of his meaningless job and taking care of his sick mother. One day Littler is assigned a secretary, Francine Pefko --the name of Dwayne Hoover’s secretary in Breakfast of Champions--, an eighteen-year old girl on her first day of work. Francine encourages Littler to have more fun on the job and changes his life in an instant, with Littler muttering the word “Eden,” as he leaves the building at the story’s conclusion.

Here once again, it is the male whose life is improved by an unsuspecting female exhibiting matronly values, allowing Littler to “play.” The character of Franice Pefko, like Rose, is problematic because she is a product of the homogenous conception of working women. Pefko is assigned her job while she is working in the “Girl Pool,” an assemblage of young women prepared to be assigned jobs as secretaries, personal assistants, and company models. Vonnegut tried this title for another unpublished short story featuring the same young woman. Pefko, who displays very few recognizable instances of character, makes the disheveled Littler a better man simply through her presence, erasing the troubles of a sick mother and a lack of public respect.

Putting aside the character deficiencies (the clearest reason for rejection) in Vonnegut’s unpublished stories, the idea that men and women need each other is one that
Vonnegut emphasizes throughout his early fiction. With the fact that magazine sales were constantly on the mind of the young Vonnegut, the major selling point of “love” necessarily comes into play in many of his stories.

Consider, for example, the short story “Beeline, Inc.” in which a baron with a heavy German accent, living on the wealth of his fabulously wealthy wife (soon to be ex-wife), decides that he can make a fortune with his invention of messenger bees. The inane idea is the optimistic dream of the Baron, who idealizes a society of all male drones. He draws a lawyer, the narrator, into his scheme to handle the business aspects of this venture. The project predictably fails, with the male drones returning to their female counterparts at the ex-wife’s manor, and the Baron sending a final message to the narrator—“What hast thou wrought?” Even the Baron, who idealizes a male society, can not live happily without a female in his life. The bees act accordingly, returning to the manor of his separated wife.

Although all of the stories I have discussed so far seem to convey a negative image of females, Vonnegut was never a misogynist. In “Hundred Dollar Kisses” (1960), a boorish man, Verne Petrie, who “spends at least fifteen dollars a month on girly magazines,” bets a janitor, Harry Barker, who claims to have been married to centerfold Patty Lee Minot, to call his ex-wife and let Verne listen in. The entire office secretly listens, as Harry calls his actual ex-wife. It turns out that the two were married at 16 in high school because she was pregnant, and she ran off after the baby was born. Harry tells her that the baby died two years later. She replies, “That’s a part of my life I’ve blotted out completely. I’m sorry, but I couldn’t care less.” The entire office, most of all Harry, is heartbroken—except for Verne. Verne maintains his typical slob attitude, overjoyed that he has heard Patty Lee Minot’s voice. The narrator, after knocking out Verne with a telephone, claims, “it came to me all in a flash that Verne Petrie was what was wrong with the world—everybody pays attention to pictures of things. Nobody pays attention to things themselves.”

In this story, Vonnegut clearly expresses a concern for the way society views women. Although the character of Patty Lee Minot represents the worst in female character, the pro-female message of the story remains clear, and the negative portrayal of Minot pales in comparison to that of the vile Petrie. One might rack up Vonnegut’s
early failures in character as experiments in successfully conveying his idea of the right kind of loving relationship between a male and female.

Vonnegut attempts to convey the difference between the public portrayal of females and real life once again in “Miss Snow, You’re Fired” (1960), in which GF&F Ceramics employee Eddie Wetzel, a woman-hating divorced man, is assigned a new secretary, eighteen-year-old Arlene Snow, who is voted the most beautiful girl in the company. Armand Flemming, a forty-year-old public relations man at the company, constantly takes Arlene aside to be an unpaid model in the company magazine. Flemming falls in love with Arlene but makes this clear by making her a fixture in the magazine, and is thus told to cut off all contact with her. At the same time, Wetzel fires Arlene for being a poor secretary, in part due to Flemming’s constant disruptions. Flemming feels responsible and, after taking out all his company money and leaving a nasty resignation note on his desk, finds Arlene and takes her for a drink. He asks her to run off with him that night, but she declines. By coincidence, Wetzel lives above the bar and has a drink there every night. Flemming attempts to fight Wetzel, who quickly punches him, whereupon they are kicked out of the bar and Wetzel takes Flemming, with Arlene, to his room to stop a bloody nose. Arlene decides that she knows why Wetzel’s marriage failed, and why Flemming is in love with her. She says, “You don’t even know me . . . I’m just the idea of a pretty girl to both of you.” They care nothing about her character, but only her appearance. Flemming leaves the country anyway, to Tahiti, and Wetzel treats Arlene to dinner to prove that he can “treat a nice girl properly.”

In Vonnegut’s unpublished fiction, the female is not always the one being treated improperly. In “The Poisoner,” Dr. Stanley Price is a prosperous heart specialist, in his middle fifties but at the peak of physical prowess and “ebulliently healthy.” His soon to be third wife, Marion, is having her fortune read by a gypsy. Later, this gypsy asks Price to put the name of the one he loves most on a card and she will tell him if this person is unfaithful; Price declines, doubting the gypsy’s powers. Price earlier heard the gypsy telling Marion “faithless,” and so he fearfully assumes that she was referring to him. He chases down the gypsy, demanding to see the card. On the card Marion has written three names, none of them Price. For the first time, Price realizes that his age is catching up with him, and that he must slow down a little. Vonnegut writes, “he thought of himself as
a patient for the first time, and realized that his thoughts were the thoughts of an aging man.” Price welcomes the idea.

In this situation, Vonnegut reverses the case of a misunderstanding between men and women, with the man mistakenly suspecting that his young fiancée is faithful, sharing the same values as his own. The most interesting aspect of this story deals with the age of the lovers and the differences between generations. The underlying moral emphasizes the positive aspects of “settling down” as one gets older. Vonnegut, on several occasions, portrays love as getting stronger with age. Just as in “Runaways,” Vonnegut explores the nature of fleeting young love, and stronger, more durable mature love in “The Poisoner.”

The unpublished story “Paris, France,” takes an even more detailed exploration of love and aging. In this story, three couples—a grouchy old plumber Arthur Futz and his wife; a middle-aged golf-pro Harry and his wife an ex-model and figure skater Rachel; and a young, charming, seemingly newlywed couple—are all on vacation in Europe, sharing the same boxcar by chance. They are headed to Paris, France. Arthur Futz efficiently navigates France and lightens up a little. Harry spends his three days with a whore and ends up being assaulted by her boyfriend; Rachel has to take care of him in the end, and they end up falling in love again. The young man deserts the young girl; she was wrapped up in dreams of love while he only wanted a weekend of carefree fun. In Paris, the two couples in shambles come together again, while the young couple falls apart.

The crucial misunderstandings between men and women in Vonnegut’s early unpublished stories do not, however, always result in the end of a relationship. In the case of “Shout About it from the Housetops” (1960), a couple is torn apart by their misunderstanding, but upon openly discussing the misunderstanding which pulled them apart they are reunited stronger (emotionally and financially) than ever.

In this unpublished story, Elsie Strang Morgan writes a book called Hypocrite’s Junction about real people in Crocker’s Falls, Vermont, the town where she lives with her husband, Lawrence. Elsie changes the names only slightly, leaving obvious the characters’ actual identities. The school-board fires her husband, a teacher, for the frank and unflattering depiction of his associates in the book. The husband feels embarrassed, and his shame almost destroys the marriage. Upon discussion, however, Elsie tells
Lawrence, “... and I wrote a book to tell you how much I loved you . . . and to show you how much I’d learned, how much you’d taught me . . . the book was as much yours as mine.” Lawrence accepts this explanation and feels entitled to share in the large sum of money which the couple receives from a movie deal for the book.

The male is only entitled to his wife’s riches, however, because of his strength of character. In an interesting retooling of this same basic scenario, Vonnegut shows a husband who already possesses the kind of wealth that Lawrence receives at the end of “Shout,” but who does not really deserve it. “Land of Opportunity” tells the story of Fred Dunn, unemployed, who lives off of his wife’s seven million dollars. His biggest achievement was finding jobs in his community for 136 Hungarian refugees after World War II. These refugees revere Fred and throw a banquet in his honor. The banquet makes Fred feel miserable and worthless, so he leaves home the next day to earn a living for himself. He ends up back at the hotel where the banquet was thrown, and he gives his word of honor to many employees that he will learn another language, learn to play a musical instrument, etc, and also asks Julius, once his chauffeur, for a job as bartender there. Julius reluctantly complies, and Fred is to start work at noon. His family rushes in before noon, and with the Hungarian refugees plead with him to keep his dignity instead of lowering himself to the level of a common bartender. His wife even threatens to divorce him if he takes the job. Upon hearing his youngest son say, “My daddy always keeps his word of honor,” Fred takes his place behind the bar “with pomp and circumstance.” In this case, Fred has to live up to his duties as an American in order to feel entitled to his riches. While the misogynistic Baron in “Beeline Inc.” failed in his business endeavor, Fred succeeds because he acts in the interest of his family.

The post-Depression dread of financial instability is most clearly present in Vonnegut’s unpublished short story, “The Epizootic.” Here, two leaders of the American Reliable and Equitable Life and Casualty Company of Connecticut discuss comically impractical ways that they can stop “the Epizootic,” an epidemic of suicide in young, successful family men. These men kill themselves in order to give their families the kind of security which they fear they will not be able to provide in a worsening economy. Much like Fred Dunn in “Land of Opportunity,” males in this story feel intense pressure
to live up to the economic responsibilities of family life; here, Vonnegut pushes the results of such pressure to their logical extremes.

In these stories, money also drives people apart. In the post-Depression, post-World War Two America of the fifties, money, and how to deal with money, was on everyone’s mind, always looming. In the case of the next story, it is literally whispering over the characters’ shoulders. In “Money Talks,” Rose, a young nurse, inherits a huge fortune from an old man she had taken care of. She meets Ben, whose grocery store has failed and can only pursue a career in clam-digging. Ben takes Rose’s groceries out to her mansion for her and thinks he is falling in love. He can not, however, silence the voice of the fortune which is hanging over their heads. She feels the same way, and he leaves. The next morning he returns, resolved. He asks her if he can dig clams on her private beach and realizes that he does love her. He defeats the voice of the fortune by clearly calling it out into the open and then declaring his love. She complies.

In Vonnegut’s world, money can also drive a man and woman apart when the voice of the money takes over. “The Pit” relates the story of television star Avery Broom, who thinks that his investment banker Archie Swift is wasting all his money, so he decides he has to fire all of his show’s employees and his house staff. Broom, completely clueless about investments, lost faith in Swift when he looked at the stock market page in the newspaper and saw that he was losing money that day. Broom decides that his employees don’t know the value of a dollar, which he himself had discovered by working hard in the foundry, or “the pit.” It turns out that the next day, while he is insulting and firing all of his employees, and also his wife Madelaine, Broom’s investments skyrocket. When he finds out, Broom attempts to rehire everyone, ignoring all the things he had said about hard-earned dollars. Recognizing Broom’s hypocrisy, they all decline his invitation, including Madelaine.

Only characters who refuse to settle down and accept differences and be satisfied with their finances run into disaster. Sometimes the process of finding a routine that works is difficult, as in the story “Little Drops of Water.” Here, the narrator is a bachelor living in New York. He tells the story of his friend Larry Whiteman, the baritone singing teacher. Larry teaches rich girls who go to New York to learn to sing; each girl follows a predictable relationship cycle in which they gradually fall in love with him and he rejects
them. The latest girl, Ellen, claims that she will not give him up and begins making routine annoyances on Larry. Larry’s life is so wound up in routine, that the day before his important Town Hall recital, Ellen stops all of her disturbances and leaves town. This turn of events upsets Larry’s routine so much that he has to make her come back, and the two end up getting married. She has to integrate herself as a wife into his life step by step, to fit his daily routine.

In this story, Vonnegut addresses the machine-like ways which some people act, and how human behavior must sometimes accommodate their mechanations. Klinkowitz writes,

“People can be prisoners of their habits or they can use these very limitations to get what they really want” (29). Ultimately, the human elements in the characters win out over their harsh dependency on routine, but in the case of “Jenny,” Vonnegut explores what happens if a man creates the “perfect female” as a robot and runs off with her.

In this story, a scientist, Dr. George Castrow, has no time for love and spends his busy research time avoiding it until he comes down with pneumonia at age thirty-three. When a nurse, Nancy, cares for him, he discovers love and becomes obsessed by it. He marries Nancy and after their honeymoon starts working on a robot woman that will bring love to the world. He becomes obsessed by the robot, Jenny, quickly devoting less and less attention to his wife, and then deciding to go on the road with his robot for good. Nancy immediately marries Castrow’s research assistant, who has secretly fallen in love with her for her virtues and faults. Many years later, Nancy requests on her deathbed that George come visit her. She leaves him the message: “Please look at the imperfect human being God gave you to love once, and try to like me a little for what I really was, or, God willing, am. Then please, Darling, become an imperfect human being again.” The message affects George, and he leaves Jenny forever, hoping to regain his job at the research laboratory. Ultimately, Castrow comes to regret his pursuit of perfection. Much like in “Hundred Dollar Kisses” or “Custom-made Bride,” perfection becomes boring when compared to imperfect values which define human beings.

Ultimately, Humanism comes down to a simple effort to understand one another’s differences and imperfections. In “The Man Without No Kiddleys,” an old man moves to Tampa, Florida to escape cold weather and read Shakespeare in peace. He is disturbed by
a ninety-four year old man, Sweeny, who bets this stranger that he can’t guess how many “kiddleys” they have between them. The annoying Sweeny drives the stranger to savagely insult him and walk away. The stranger becomes distressed over hurting a fellow old man and goes back to apologize to Sweeny, who has lost the will to live. Only when the stranger reveals that Sweeny won the bet, does Sweeny brighten up again.

Vonnegut delivers the same message in a similar story, “Ruth.” Here, Ruth Hurley, a young widow, travels a thousand miles to meet the mother of her husband Ted, who was killed in war. Ruth is pregnant with Ted’s child. The mother, Mrs. Faulkner, requests Ted’s personal items from Ruth, who has Ted’s boyhood items enshrined in her home. Faulkner’s wants only to remember Ted as a boy, and not as a man; Ruth finds this fetishizing wrong. After nervously knocking one of Ted’s hand-made ceramics off the shelf, Ruth requests to go to bed immediately. The next morning, when Faulkner suggests that Ruth leave her baby there with Faulkner and she move on, Ruth is enraged and tries to leave town immediately. After rescuing a filthy old man, dying in the train station, Ruth realizes that she must help those whom no one else would dare touch and decides that she has to go help Ted’s imperfect mother, “a terribly sick old woman.”

One of Vonnegut’s strongest unpublished stories shows the way in which some imperfect humans can let greed, glamour, and a disconcerting sense of homogeneity blind them to the common decency which humans need. In “Return to Salerno,” a twenty-five year old actress, Beatrice Bundy, moves alone to the small town of North Crawford, New Hampshire, going by the name Mary Constant. She has lots of money, and so she moves into an over-priced, dilapidated mansion. Word gets around that anyone who wants work in her house can do so by praising a movie she was in as a child, Return to Salerno, and subscribing to The White Christian Minuteman, which contains headlines such as “Papists, Jews, Negroes, Foreigners Set Main Goal: Mongrelize U.S.A.!!” written by Dr. Lionel J.D. Jones. Many townspeople subscribe, not understanding at first that they are subscribing to a white supremacist publication. The first issue they receive contains a glowing testimony from Beatrice Bundy. The men have already invited Bundy to the Mask and Wig Club before they realize she is racist. The townspeople feel tempted to speak out against Bundy at the meeting, but she is bringing almost everyone the steady income which they now enjoy. The woman who sold Bundy her house, Hazel Butcher,
has particularly taken to pleasing Bundy, even her decorating her car with a “Keep Undesirable Elements Out of the U.S.A.” bumper sticker. Hazel, through her loyalty and friendship, gains the power to hire and fire for Bundy, and as she fires John, the only man who has spoken out so far, she communicates a lesson to the rest of the town: the citizens will follow the rule of The White Christian Minuteman. Under this doctrine, the town no longer accepts anyone except 100% Anglo-Saxons, and its real-estate is advertised in the magazine. The community votes for these measures in fear of being out of a job. Bundy gets the lead part in the town’s play, a reproduction of *Return to Salerno*. The domination of the W.C.M. continues all summer, until John employs a new sixteen-year-old member to the club who is obviously better for the part than Bundy. Bundy leaves town that night, not realizing that the girl is imaginary. The magazine then becomes a joke among the townspeople until all of their subscriptions expire.

I have to use the terribly over-quoted yet still effective paradigm which sums up Vonnegut’s solution to the problems of humankind, via the character Eliot Rosewater: “There’s only one rule that I know of, babies--: God damn it, you’ve got to be kind” (110). The unpublished literature of Kurt Vonnegut ably demonstrates this Humanist principle.
Chapter Two: 
Struggling to Deal with World War Two

Kurt Vonnegut often claimed that *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a novel which he had been unsuccessfully trying for twenty years to write about his experience in the firebombing of Dresden. Many selections from the Kurt Vonnegut Collection show how long and how persistently he tried to do so, with a dozen stories directly addressing Vonnegut’s experience in World War Two, several of them set in Dresden. One can easily see these stories as a precursor to *SH5*, but they also represent important benchmarks in the development of Vonnegut’s Humanism.

The firebombing of Dresden conspicuously haunts all of the Vonnegut novels which precede *SH5*. Eliot Rosewater is mystified by a hypnotizing vision of the atomic bomb in action; in *Cat’s Cradle*, Felix Hoenikker’s “Ice-Nine” tablet ushers in a nuclear-scale holocaust. Strangely, however, none of Vonnegut’s published short stories address the bombing—yet over a dozen unpublished documents, fiction and non-fiction, reveal Vonnegut’s direct attempts to express his Dresden experience. Even before the apocalyptic invocations of *Cat’s Cradle* and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, the psychological trauma of Dresden is clearly visible in Vonnegut’s unpublished short stories. These long-concealed documents are crucial in understanding Vonnegut’s earliest attempts to confront the trauma of war, when he had not yet abstracted the experience into his early novels and long before the stylistically groundbreaking *SH5*. After twenty years of post-traumatic writers’ block, the post-modern structures of *SH5* were in some ways necessary for Vonnegut to express his troubled meditations. After all, “Vonnegut’s personality . . . generates a unique structure” (*Effect 80*) which often relies on the deconstruction of literary norms.

The regular rejections of Vonnegut’s unpublished Dresden stories suggest that the fresh post-war culture of the American fifties simply would not allow Vonnegut to express the bitter sentiments he later worked into *SH5*. Also, the stylistic experimentation of his first four novels was necessary in developing the literary precision of *SH5*’s structural boldness. Vonnegut completed his necessary gestation time just as the cultural climate became ready for the powerful and cohesive message of *SH5*; Loree Rackstraw suggests that “Vonnegut’s novels exemplify a sweeping new epistemology of dynamic
wholeness . . . that emerged in the mid-60s” (51). This cultural sea change, along with well-paced stylistic improvements, allowed Vonnegut to express himself uniquely, and towards a receptive audience, in the crucial era of the Vietnam War.

Vonnegut’s two decades of reflection lend *Slaughterhouse Five* a tempered distance from the tragedy, which yields a rational assessment of the bombing as well as the larger implications of modern warfare. Tanner writes, “it is not a novel simply about Dresden. It is a novel about a novelist who has been unable to erase the memory of his wartime experience and the Dresden fire-storm, even while he has been inventing stories and fantasies in his role as a writer since the end of that war” (125).

Vonnegut’s role as a writer, from his very first experiences in journalism at the Shortridge High School newspaper, was always to “serve his society” (*Conversations* 45). Vonnegut performs such service by pairing his stories and fantasies with philosophical principles and moral directives. Due to the moral complexity of such a major tragedy, however, Vonnegut needed twenty years of reflection and the groundwork of four novels in order to comment upon the bombing. Vonnegut’s unpublished short stories help map the path of his developing Humanist philosophy towards *SH5*.

Although “there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre” (*SH5* 19), there are many avenues to express feelings regarding a tragedy. Vonnegut experimented with many formats. “A Dresden Goodnight” is Vonnegut’s unfinished attempt at a dramatic play taking place during the bombing of Dresden. With a rain of bombs overhead, two soldiers frantically argue over whether staying alive is worth the heartache. The frantic soldiers, completely possessed by fear and huddled away in a bunker similar to Vonnegut’s slaughterhouse, can discuss nothing but the horror surrounding them. There is no rationality or clear judgment; there is only chaos all around. While the intensity of this play would have been effective in conveying the crippling trauma of warfare, it does not allow room for Vonnegut’s more sanguine commentary on the bombing; getting that commentary into words would take twenty years and the implementation of post-modernist techniques made feasible by “a sweeping new epistemology of dynamic wholeness and subjectivity that emerged in the mid-60s, one with global implications for life sustainability” (Rackstraw 51). A rational, distanced commentary, rather than the
drama of overwhelming emotion in “A Dresden Goodnight” lies at the heart of this epistemology.

“A Dresden Goodnight” has a distinct setting in Vonnegut’s writing because its action takes place during the bombing. But, even in the case of SH5, Vonnegut would typically discuss the bombing with only a thorough distance from the event. Even in his unpublished short stories, Vonnegut usually avoids discussing the physical act of the bombing and sticks to its aftermath. “Spoils” relates the story of Paul, a prisoner of war in Hellendorf, Sudetenland. On the day that allied troops rescue him and two other American P.O.W.s, they all decide to take part in the common practice of looting the enemy’s homes. Paul finds a rabbit in a barn, smashes its skull with the back of an axe, and skins it. The poor, weary civilians who live there return; as Paul is leaving, he sees a young boy on crutches hobble into the barn in search of his pet rabbit, sobbing his heart out into the pelt when he finds it. After this moment, Paul can only seem to plunder one item, “for some reason . . . one rusted and badly bent Luftwaffe saber,” while his companions “accumulated a sizeable quantity of German treasure.” After the troops return to their happy homes, Paul remains troubled by his encounter with war’s innocent bystanders. At dinner, Paul’s wife chides him, asking, “Honey . . . couldn’t you have brought home just a little something better than you did?” upon seeing the exquisite silver set which the husband of a friend had plundered.

In “Happy Birthday, 1951,” Vonnegut once again captures the vapid enchantment with the glory of warfare which Paul’s wife had embodied. Here, a refugee woman leaves a baby to an old man on the last day of an unspecified war. Years later, the old man takes the boy into the wilderness as a birthday present, in order to get away from the war-devastated ruins of the city and “away from war for a day.” The boy, however, is entirely fixated on war; only a rusted tank which they come across in the forest fascinates him. The old man, now frustrated, insists that the boy will not appreciate the gift until he is older. By placing the moral vacuum of Paul’s wife into the body of a child, Vonnegut implies that a fascination with war, one most commonly held by adults, is a childish quality.

Vonnegut even uses elements of science fiction to approach his feelings about the same theme in his unpublished short stories. “Great Day” takes place in the year 2,037,
Heath 23

when the world is unified by peace and humans have defeated hunger. A sixteen-year-old boy joins the Army of the World, which puts him to work on a secret mission to build a time machine. The soldiers decide to travel back in time to a World War I battle. Although the machine’s design supposedly protects these troops from being pulled into the battle, the narrator and several others’ fascination with their surroundings draws them out. They then become stuck in the year 1918. All time travelers but the narrator, who is wounded, are killed in the battle. When American troops save the narrator, they give him the ironic nickname, “Great Day.” Although there is no practical reason to enter a dangerous World War I Battlefield, the war-hungry soldiers of the futuristic Army of the World do it anyway. Vonnegut suggests that, even a world long free of war, humans’ imbecilic fascination with war will remain in perpetual motion. “Great Day” proposes a hypothetical scenario in which humans can actually experience the warfare which they understand only from the media’s glorified portrayals. Tellingly, all but one traveler are unceremoniously slaughtered.

“Spoils,” “Happy Birthday, 1951,” and “Great Day” establish the common Vonnegut theme which propels much of American society’s interest in glorified warfare: fictional media’s inability to portray war realistically. In SH5, Mary O’Hare says, “You’ll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you’ll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we’ll have a lot more of them” (14). Although Paul’s wife in “Spoils” does reflect the stereotypical housewife of the fifties that is sometimes present in Vonnegut’s early work, the story is still an arresting conviction of many humans’ inability to envision the tragic realities of warfare. By removing that unpublished story’s troubling portrayal of domesticity, “Happy Birthday, 1951” conveys more clearly Vonnegut’s same frustration with the general public’s addiction to war. After two decades, in SH5 Vonnegut replaced Paul’s narcissistic, materialistic wife with the conscientious Mary O’Hare, an intelligent human being who understands, better than anyone, the fallacy of traditional war stories.

“Wailing Shall Be in All the Streets,” like “Spoils,” contains condemnation of oblivious American culture, this time Vonnegut turns towards the warfare tactics new recruits are learning during basic training in World War Two: “A lot of people relished
the idea of total war: it had a modern ring to it, in keeping with our spectacular technology.” What follows is an oft-recited description of the Dresden bombing and its true significance, in a particularly elegant and moving account of Vonnegut’s time as a POW in Dresden: “Soft citizens of the American democracy learned to kick a man below the belt and make the bastard scream . . . I felt then as I feel now, that I would have given my life to save Dresden for the World’s generations to come. That is how everyone should feel about every city on Earth.”

In other unpublished stories, Vonnegut avoids the bleak tragedy of “Spoils” and “Wailing,” but the topic of post-bombing looting remains frequent. In “Atrocity Story,” released American POWs in Dresden tell the story of Steve Malloti, who is arrested and shot by Germans for plundering a jar of string beans in the aftermath of the bombing. The superior officers to whom the narrator tells the story insist that, even though the trial was in Russian and therefore incomprehensible to Malloti, he was aware of his crime and he stood a fair trial. This pretense of justice dismays the soldier relating the story, leading them to discuss: “It’s a good goddamn thing they shot a Russian the same day.” ‘Yeah,’ said Jim. ‘They’ll string up every Jerry within 50 miles of that rifle range for doing it.’” Steve Malloti is clearly the model for SH5’s Edgar Derby, but his treatment is markedly different. While Vonnegut’s unpublished fiction attempts to rationalize the execution of Malloti, Derby’s death elicits only a predictable “so it goes.”

Malloti is not the only character from SH5 present in Vonnegut’s unpublished stories. The deplorable Lazarro often appears as the equally despicable Louis Gigliano, an American POW. In “Brighten Up!,” Gigliano immediately tells German guards that “he wanted no part of the war, which he considered to be brother against brother, and the handiwork of Roosevelt and Jewish international bankers” (2). A guard makes Louis his orderly while forcing other prisoners into hard labor each day. Louis begins a racket with the troops, trading them extra rations and cigarettes for their watches and wedding rings; loan-sharking soon follows. After the bombing, which the narrator only mentions in passing, the troops have to go to work exhuming the dead; Gigliano encourages them to plunder the corpses’ treasure for him in exchange for goods. Even when his favorable guard leaves the camp, Gigliano convinces the next one to let him become the troops’ barber.
While “Brighten Up!” merely presents the unlikable Gigliano, Vonnegut punishes Gigliano for his villainy in an unpublished story, “Just You and Me, Sammy.” The story’s narrator is Sam Kleinhans, an American soldier who becomes stuck with the sleazy Private George Fisher. Fisher is the same character as Gigliano, but Vonnegut portrays him as more swindling and even less likeable. Fisher, fearing that his superiors will try him for treason as a collaborator, suggests that he trade dog-tags with Kleinhans, who will then escape to Prague and claim he lost his memory. Kleinhans shoots down the outrageous scheme, but Fisher continues his fearful insistence. Ultimately, Kleinhans forces himself to shoot and kill Fisher out of fear of his own life. Vonnegut relieves the weight of this wartime tragedy when records reveal, in the story’s conclusion, that Fisher was actually a German intelligence agent.

“Just You and Me, Sammy,” is for Vonnegut an early experiment in poetic justice. SH5 contains a complete reversal of Lazarro’s fate and of justice itself. Instead of being punished for his own evil deeds, Lazarro enacts vengeance upon the innocent Billy Pilgrim, in the form of an assassination for a minor inconvenience. This reversal of justice reflects Vonnegut’s evolving form of Humanism. While his unpublished fiction sometimes explores a world in which right and wrong exist, these avenues do not allow Vonnegut to express his true war experience, in which he witnessed first-hand the dehumanizing horror of weapons’ destructive power. As in “A Dresden Goodnight,” the mature Vonnegut lives only in a world of chaos, where justice does not occur naturally but exists only as an abstract ideal. Instead of bemoaning the chaotic nature of the world, however, Vonnegut’s Humanist beliefs encourage the practice of common decency in order to help humans tolerate a world without natural justice.

In “The Commandant’s Desk” (1951), Vonnegut once again experiments with justice. American troops, stationed in Russia after the conclusion of World War Two, are still skeptical and suspicious of Czechs, and all Europeans, as Nazi collaborators. Captain Evans, who has lost his wife and children in a bombing, is particularly bitter and hateful. Melnik, A Czech worker, is ordered by a superior to build a desk for the captain; he despises the captain so much that he installs a bomb in a secret compartment. Before the completion of the desk, Evans decides to leave the country and the desk is sent to a more
tolerant lieutenant. Melnik secretly removes the bomb. The lieutenant’s common decency saves his own life, while the hateful Captain barely missed his fate.

Ultimately, natural justice is for Vonnegut only a pleasant fantasy. In his unpublished short fiction, pleasant fantasies are commonplace, as in the case of “Guns Before Butter,” in which three American POWs in Dresden and their German guard are constantly preoccupied with elaborate discussions of food, which take their minds off of warfare. The men keep a notebook of their most lucid culinary fantasies, the most fantastic one involving a stack of a dozen pancakes with fried eggs between each layer. “I Shall Not Want” tells the same story, but from Vonnegut’s own perspective in the form of a comic personal essay.

Vonnegut also tried using comedy to approach fifties America’s crippling fear of bombing. In the unpublished “Shelter-Hopping,” he presents a farcical proposal for “shelter-hopping kits,” portable kits designed for use in bomb shelters. Vonnegut calls his first model the “Pak-1,” which contains three tablets of Cyklon-B poison, three small but deadly explosive charges, and a “scratcher”—defined as “anything that might induce a shelter occupant to open his door of his own free will.” A scratcher, in one of its many forms, “can be made to sound like a beloved family pet scratching to be let in.” In the event of the nuclear holocaust of World War III, a shelter-hopper, defined as “a person badly in need of shelter during World War III—sort of a Twentieth-Century Everyman,” will have everything he needs within a trusty shelter-hopping kit. Vonnegut used hilariously tragic circumstances in the wake of an apocalypse, such as the pitiful sound of the “beloved family pet,” to indicate that this piece is meant to be comical; the hysteria which he played upon, however, was a serious part of life for many Americans.

Vonnegut’s inability to have published any of his early takes on his Dresden experience speaks less of the quality of his short stories, others of which he was able to get published at that time, but more of 1950s American culture’s reluctance to realistically assess the worst horrors of World War Two. As the media strove forward in its depiction of the spotless nuclear family, it discarded the horrific scenes which made this peacetime a reality. This represents a crucial reversal of justice in Vonnegut’s own experience. Only when the harsh realities of the Vietnam War set in is Vonnegut’s Humanist criticism of war welcomed, when he has finally abandoned fallible poetic
justice, and incorporated the most salient themes of his unpublished stories into his masterwork, *Slaughterhouse Five*. 
Chapter Three:  
Science-Fiction and the Hypnotic Power of Progress  

Kurt Vonnegut’s distaste for the designation “science-fiction author” is well documented and much-discussed within Vonnegut scholarship, with the touchstone usually being his short essay “Science Fiction,” present in *Wampeters, Foma, and Granfalloons*. As an author of short stories for 1950s magazines, Vonnegut did some pandering to the sci-fi “slicks,” but his “science-fiction” consistently retains the compassionate Humanism which defines his work.

Vonnegut rejected being called a “science-fiction author” primarily because of the popular opinion of science-fiction during the fifties and sixties. Readers at that time generally considered science-fiction magazines kids’ stuff or worse, and science-fiction novels were a niche market cornered by towering figures like Asimov, Orwell, and Wells. The reading public, with a handful of “legitimate” science-fiction authors, therefore focused on “serious” authors instead of unknown newcomers like Vonnegut. But just like Asimov and Orwell, Vonnegut was redefining the reductive genre of science-fiction, injecting it with the serious political and philosophical commentary usually reserved for “great literature.”

Stemming from dissatisfaction with his job as a research and development publicist for General Electric, Vonnegut’s “science” stories often deal explicitly with similar institutions and particularly their dehumanizing notions of “progress.” These scenarios are present in his early published work, but they are more common in Vonnegut’s unpublished short fiction on which I am focusing. In the unpublished shorts, Vonnegut struggles to find the most effective way to demystify the generally accepted maxim that “progress” is always beneficial to humans, much like his first novel, *Player Piano*, which explores the dehumanizing implications of machine automation. Vonnegut’s unpublished shorts often point to horrifying weapons of mass destruction as examples of the “progress” which scientific research creates—a topic present in nearly all of Vonnegut’s novels. Although Vonnegut displays a healthy distrust for technology, he is too astute an anthropologist to condemn technology itself—humans create all technology, and therefore they are to be held responsible rather than the machines themselves.
Although Vonnegut’s “science-fiction” encompasses realistic elements and serious contemplations of technology, it also sometimes contains typical genre elements which are easy targets for inattentive critics who are eager to categorize, and thus make more manageable, an author’s work. For example, the little green aliens he calls Tralfamadorians, present in *Slaughterhouse Five* and *The Sirens of Titan* seem to come straight out of a sensational comic for pre-pubescent boys. But upon closer inspection, Vonnegut invokes these instantly recognizable facets of science-fiction only to turn the genre on its head and upset readers’ expectations. Rather than pulling out rayguns or demanding “take me to your leader,” the Tralfamadorians who abduct Billy Pilgrim express complex philosophical attitudes towards life and war, so nuanced and satirical that multiple readings are required for full understanding. To Vonnegut, these aliens embody a pacified segment of the American public which needs a “reality check”; the stark juxtaposition of juvenile science-fiction tropes with historical and cultural fact makes *Slaughterhouse-Five* powerful.

Vonnegut’s unpublished fiction certainly has instances of oddball science-fiction, and it contains the same kind of undercutting Humanism as *SH5*. In “The Petrified Ants,” two Russian myrmecologist brothers, who study ants, find several samples of ancient ant colonies found in a mineshaft. Inside, the brothers discover that this ancient ant society mirrors human society, with houses, families, books and even paintings. Slowly, some ants develop pincers and become soldier or worker types. The soldiers and workers begin to kill the ants with no pincers. To the brothers, this evolution represents the horrifying effects of Communism. Borgorov, the mine supervisor, sees the history in reverse, as the pincered ants coming together to defeat the evil Capitalist pincer-less ants.

Although the absurdity of this plot is what most likely made this story unappealing to publishers, the young Vonnegut skillfully displays how it is possible to view historic political movements, given the same evidence, from two completely opposite perspectives. One can assume, however, that Vonnegut agrees with the brothers’ view of Communism, as he depicts the unlikable Borogorov’s perspective as cruel. Vonnegut, a lifelong lover of art, would never support the wanton destruction of art. “The Petrified Ants” effectively shows how even the absurd concept of ants’ mimicking human culture can, in Vonnegut’s writing, embody a profound political message.
Vonnegut’s unpublished fiction also includes tiny aliens. In “The Nice Little People,” Lowell swift, a department store linoleum salesman, finds a paperknife at his feet. As he rides a bus home as he thinks lovingly about his wife, Madelaine, who makes far more money than he does. Lowell comes home to find Madelaine gone on a business dinner, and to his surprise, three tiny men and women emerge from the paperknife. After Lowell entertains the little people, Madelaine comes home and reveals that she has agreed to marry her boss. Lowell, still overjoyed by his discovery of the tiny aliens, is not even bothered. However, the tiny knife spaceship flies into Madelaine’s heart. Lowell calls the police to explain the murder, telling the whole story. “In a way, it was my fault,” he said. “The little people thought I was God.”

Although the absurd little people are straight from the comic books, even at this early stage Vonnegut once again uses an absurd scenario to make a larger point. Vonnegut, in a sensational mirror of faith-driven murder, emphasizes the dangerous potential of religious devotion.

Religion is a common theme in Vonnegut’s unpublished manuscripts. In “Please Omit Flowers,” a man who committed suicide communicates from Heaven with his wife through a Ouija board. He tells her that the joke around Heaven is, “Hell is closed for repairs,” the joke being that there was never any Hell at all. He says “everyone travels by trampoline streets, and roller-skates on a big white table for miles when they want to be alone.” He also relates how he runs into a swarm, similar to mosquitoes, of the souls of broken watches. He writes, “Tomorrow we are going to Dog Heaven on tricycles with wheels ten-feet in diameter. Doesn’t that sound like fun?” Here, Vonnegut pokes fun at simplistic views of Heaven and Hell religion, emphasizing the absurdity of such beliefs. The notion of “trampoline streets” and broken watches’ souls parallels the inanity of Capitalist ants and paperknife spaceships.

Vonnegut invokes Hell and the Devil more directly in “Armageddon in Retrospect.” Here, Vonnegut experiments with a Gothic tale in which an American oil billionaire insists that the Devil causes all mental illness. With his powerful affluence, and the assistance of a scientist named Dr. Tarbell, the oil tycoon starts a research foundation which aims to rid the world of the Devil. Soon, the hunt for the Devil brings the world to share a common goal. This unity, however, predictably shifts to international
competition; Russia begins to compete with U.S. research in a religious “Space Race.” With an increasing focus on the race rather than on the original crusade, the world quickly loses interest completely. Tarbell continues research of his own volition, and in his final experiment to capture the Devil, he becomes trapped in an electrified metal drum. The narrator witnesses this experiment, and at the tale’s conclusion reveals his name: Dr. Lucifer J. Mephisto.

To the atheist Vonnegut, the Devil is as much science-fiction as a Tralfamadorian. This early story contains three themes which become constants in Vonnegut’s work: religion, mental illness, and scientific research. Vonnegut most often attempts to show how these elements in any combination create chaos. The worldwide competition to discover the Devil clearly mocks (or predicts) the American-Russian Space Race, suggesting quite explicitly that these kind of inane contests outwardly attempt to prove good while overlooking a conspicuous evil beneath and causing more harm than good. The protagonists in this story use science only as an aggressive tool.

Vonnegut once attempted to incorporate poetic justice into his ominous reflections on technology. In “Requiem for Zeitgeist” (1950) a man claims to be the bodyguard of the deceased inventor, Omar Zeitgeist, who created a “cosmic bomb,” which “works on the same principle as what holds the universe together, only backwards.” After World War Two, Zeitgeist hides himself away in a tropical rainforest to finish his plans for the bomb. The jungle’s people, Witotos, believe that there is a white man in the forest whose skull, if turned into a drum, will make rain fall on desperately dry crops. Obviously, the brilliant skull of Zeitgeist soon becomes a ritual device.

This story shares many similarities with H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Call Of Cthulhu,” but while Lovecraft’s nightmare embodied the unseen horrors of the imagination, Vonnegut asserts that weapons of mass destruction such as Zeitgeist’s “cosmic bomb” represent are the ultimate materialization of human horror. Ironically, the terrifying prospect of skull-robbing savages pales in comparison to the horrific potential of Zeitgeist’s inner-mind. The Witotos, unimpressed by the intellect of Zeitgeist, inadvertently avert cosmic destruction. Vonnegut says less for the American public,
entranced by promised “miracles” of science, which often come in the form of apocalyptic weapons.

Within Vonnegut’s focus on a public fascination with both scientific progress and religious miracles, these two concepts begin to blur and become nearly the same. Along with the religious overtones in Vonnegut’s unpublished work, hypnotism is also, and not coincidentally, a recurrent theme. In “Hall of Mirrors,” Two detectives investigate a hypnotist who seems to have kidnapped or murdered four women last seen at his home. The hypnotist, Weems, seemingly hypnotizes the detectives, but in a convenient reversal of expectations, the detectives reveal themselves as amateur hypnotists, hired by the police to fool Weems. This story’s formulaic structure, unlike much of Vonnegut’s unpublished work, does little to endow it with a larger cultural significance; it does, however, establish Vonnegut’s early interest in the concept of hypnosis.

A fixation on hypnosis continues in “Look at the Birdie.” Here, Felix Koradubian, an ex-felon, blackmails innocent strangers by taking their photos. After giving his wife the photos, Koradubian convinces the victims that he has 123 psychiatric patients from his files classified as paranoiacs; he threatens to convince these paranoiacs that the subjects in the photos are the masterminds behind conspiracies against them and need to be killed. Koradubian then extorts money from the victims.

To be a successful author of short stories, Vonnegut had to choose topics which would appeal to the general public; to Vonnegut, hypnosis was a concern with profound cultural significance. The widespread rejection of “Hall of Mirrors” and “Look at the Birdie” suggests that the American short-story readership, or at least its publishers, found little interest in the topic when a writer discussed it so openly. Instead, Vonnegut’s forthcoming works succeeded by incorporating elements of hypnosis more subtly into his cultural surveys.

Vonnegut’s suspicion of a cultural hypnotism stems from his time as a public relations writer for General Electric. At this major corporation, Vonnegut found out first-hand that business comes first and science second. The company’s motto “Progress is Our Most Important Product” became a slogan against which Vonnegut would rail for the rest of his life; Morse explains, “progress in technology thus does not equate with progress in humanity, despite a fuzzy popular linking of the two . . . Progress, Vonnegut
maintains, is but an illusion of motion going somewhere, a delusion of society advancing, or a series of chimerical detours through life” (92, 102). In Vonnegut’s work, the hypnotizing power of “progress” is crucial.

Vonnegut highlights the misleading nature of the General Electric slogan in “And on Your Left.” In this unpublished story, three research scientists working in a lab very similar to G.E.’s branch of research and development, are constantly interrupted by tours. With these interruptions completely stifling progress, the scientists decide to fake a groundbreaking discovery during an important tour, so that the guests will donate enough money to labs to stop the tours. The crowd is enthralled, as the flashy display captures their hearts as well as their generous donations. The plan backfires, however, when the boss insists that all guests see discoveries as amazing as this one.

In a critical reading, the audience becomes the focus in this story. Much like the general masses in The Sirens of Titan who are “crazy about miracles” (3), the guests of the lab tour only want to see the most entertaining display of science, rather than a practical and sound application of science, which is predictably less exciting. The research lab’s immediate response to the crowd’s interest is to manipulate this interest for financial gain, thus warping the noble pursuit of science and creating the opportunity for unconscionable science.

Vonnegut extols practical scientific research rather than impractical, but he also understands that the moral complexities of research can be hard to delineate. In Player Piano, Paul Proteus wonders, to his consternation, which machines should be destroyed, and which should be saved. “Confido,” the namesake of an unpublished short story, is a device which Proteus and Vonnegut would surely choose to destroy. Henry, a humble research scientist, invents on his own this device, and chooses the name Confido as a mix of ‘confidant’ and the pet name Fido. Confido makes realistic conversation with its user through a hearing aid. Henry believes that this device will make him rich. It turns out that the voice of Confido is “a direct wire to the worst in us,” as it tells Henry’s wife Ellen only vicious neighborhood gossip and tells her son that he is adopted (he actually is not). The family ends up burying Confido and abandoning plans to sell the product.

In Vonnegut’s work, technology often represents the worst in humans. Confido is an example of a machine which does not improve human life and is therefore impractical.
Confido must be destroyed, like the atomic bomb; like Player Piano’s Checker Charley and like Jenny, the “perfect” wife. Although Vonnegut’s frequently pessimistic view of progress seems a thorough condemnation of all technology, his attitudes are more complex. Gholson suggests, “his experience working among so many scientists in the service of corporate progress frightened Vonnegut” (153). But because he saw the best and worst of science at G.E., “Vonnegut’s work is always marked by a deep ambivalence about the Luddite impulse” (Spatt 122).

Technology, after all, is an unavoidable aspect of human life, and often in Vonnegut’s work, “the narrative’s dystopian ideas of an unhappy future are played against recurring scenes where characters strive for domestic happiness” (Effect 37). “Four Utterly Honest People” focuses on married couple George and Lilly Peare and their more successful acquaintances Stanley and Claudette Waters. George creates labor-intensive hand-made furniture which reaps little profit but is satisfying, while Stanley works at the General Forge and Foundry Company making mass-produced E-Z Fry griddles. George once worked at G&F but quit because it was unsatisfying. The couples initially resent each other but come to realize that they are all honest, working for what they think life is about in different ways. When Stanley’s G&F division goes bust, he goes to George hoping to sell his furniture. Even though they know this business venture will not be as profitable as the G&F, all four feel happier doing something that they believe in. The sentiments of this story reflect those of Player Piano, in which Paul Proteus hunts for satisfaction by procuring an old-fashioned farm on which to labor.

While George and Stanley find satisfaction in a lifestyle of manual labor, Paul Proteus finds no contentment in his dilapidated barn. Perhaps the different outcomes of these tales are due to the time period in which they take place: one in the 1950s, the other in an undated dystopian future. Vonnegut suggests that hope for satisfaction can be found in the present day, while the uncertain future, ravaged by “progress,” will present less opportunity for happiness and personal satisfaction. Vonnegut’s Humanist emphasis on the value of human life ties together the generation gap between these works, and extends to the rest of his literature; Klinkowitz sagely asserts, “The question, ‘What are people for?’ is central to his entire body of work” (Effect 146).
Chapter Four:
How Kurt Vonnegut’s Humanism Paradoxically Paved the Way for Posthumanism

As I have demonstrated, Kurt Vonnegut’s unpublished stories laid a foundation for the Humanist philosophy which characterizes his work. Although “throughout the turbulent changes of five decades, Vonnegut has demonstrated remarkable philosophical consistency” (Spatt 119), the rest of the world did not. Soon after the publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, which I argue contains Vonnegut’s most moving Humanist philosophies, began a new wave of science-fiction literature which aimed to upturn the static notions of a Human-centered world. This new cultural and literary force was deemed “Post-humanism” as theorists Ihab Hassan, Donna Haraway, and authors of Cyberpunk literature fully embraced it in the late nineteen-eighties.

Because Vonnegut was at this point already one of the world’s foremost purveyors of Humanism, his work should act as a foil to seemingly binary Post-Humanism. However, even in his earliest work, I argue that Vonnegut engaged with the canon of Post-human texts. In Vonnegut’s “Outline for Science Fiction Novel,” in which he describes what will eventually become his first novel, *Player Piano*, he quotes Norbert Weiner’s *Cybernetics: Or the Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, the generally accepted genesis of Cyberpunk discourse. The cyborg is indeed a crucial figure in crucial Cyberpunk and Post-Humanism literature: important texts with the cyborg at their center include Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto,” Katherine Hayles’ “How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics,” William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, Bruce Sterling’s *Schismatrix*, and Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*, among others. Vonnegut’s unpublished “Outline” reveals that he, with Weiner’s important text as a cornerstone of inspiration in his writing career, was engaging in a Post-Human discourse long before most of the leaders in the field. In this way, the Humanism of Vonnegut serves as a foundation for the Post-humanism of the next century.

Many theorists argue, however, that Posthumanism contains an ideology wholly distinct from its predecessor. Ihab Hassan, in 1977’s “Towards a Posthumanist Culture?” writes, “We need to understand that five-hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call
Posthumanism.” If the world is constantly now reaching a new era of Posthumanism, as Hassan suggested three decades ago, the humanistic work of Vonnegut would necessarily become outdated and irrelevant, supplanted by a more contemporary form of Humanism. The essential facets of Posthumanism concern a process of thought which advances beyond the traditional distinctions of race, class, and gender, and instead, responsibly considers new and unpredictable assemblages of life which we can not analyze by traditional methods. Although the origins of Humanism sometimes fall victim to antiquated viewpoints, I argue that Hassan’s reductive claim for the demise of Humanism does not apply to the objective and astute atheistic Humanism of Vonnegut, which serves as a useful bridge between Humanism and Posthumanism.

Although Vonnegut did not have the scientific training of the many theorists who inform the genre, his fifty-plus years of technological observation made him an objective reporter. Vonnegut began writing in a time when computers were still fantastic machines and products of humanity’s wildest dreams. Yet Vonnegut was privy to these technological developments through his job at G.E., and his using them in his writing represents the same kind of predictive literature that authors of Cyberfiction would later write. Vonnegut’s unpublished short fiction follows the maxim that machines should be practical, increasing rather than depleting human dignity. Two texts I have already discussed, “Jenny” and “Confido,” suggest that machines can be wholly detrimental to the quality of Human life; another, “Four Utterly Honest People,” demonstrates the liberating empowerment of manual labor.

In the unpublished short story “Robotville and Mr. Caslow,” Vonnegut even explores the Post-Human implications of cyborg rights. Taking place after World War III, fought between humans and robots, a man returns to his old public grade school. At the doors, he demands that a janitor let him in to see his old principal, Mr. Caslow. The narrator has to fool the janitor by claiming that he is an old friend of the mayor’s, who will be coming to the school that night to see Caslow. The janitor makes a gesture on his forehead which gives away that he was POW in the war: “He had a wire installed in his brain that told him by radio signals what to do . . .” This wire is “what had made him be a robot.” The narrator finds out the “the ex-prisoners of war, the ex-robots, are begging to be used as robots again.” The janitor urges him to sign a bill which would make this
practice legal. As the unfinished story comes to an end, a group confronts Caslow regarding the bill; the schoolchildren’s parents are all ex-POWs.

Although the urge to abandon machinery serves as the focal point in these three stories, Vonnegut does not condemn technology. Instead, he merely suggests that humans should abandon these stories’ machines because they are impractical. Vonnegut’s published fiction followed the same trend. For example, Vonnegut’s short story “Epicac,” republished in *Welcome to the Monkey House*, is the tale of the world’s first supercomputer, which falls in love with a woman after a shy scientist employs him to write love letters for her. This imaginative reworking of Edmond Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which at the time would have seemed far-fetched and hilarious, perhaps even terrifying, is now more realistic in an age concerned with the problematic emergence of “artificial intelligence” in machines. Vonnegut’s early explorations of artificial intelligence anticipate the cyborg politics of Haraway and Hayles, and although “Epicac” is a rather simplistic story and does not fully explore the implications of Epicac’s existence, Vonnegut went on to add depth to his viewpoint on A.I. in his first novel, *Player Piano*.

Epicac is also present in *Player Piano*. In a second plot, Major Halyard shows the “Shah of Bratpuhr” around America, eventually introducing the Shah to EPICAC XIV, “an electronic computing machine—a brain, if you like” (116). The president declares that “EPICAC XIV was, in effect, the greatest individual in history, that the wisest man that had ever lived was to EPICAC XIV as a worm was to the wisest man” (120). The Shah calls the machine “Baku!,” which means “false god” (123). Although the strangeness of foreign cultures plagues and dates *Player Piano*, the Shah’s apprehension of futuristic technologies predicts the present-day discrepancies in technology between less developed and more advanced nations, discrepancies which present glaring issues in modern cyberfiction.

In *Player Piano*, the population of Ilium, New York, is divided into two sections: The Works, where engineers live and work, and Homestead, populated by the “common” people. Many of Homestead’s residents, whose jobs have been mechanized by technological developments at the Works, are employed in the “Reeks and Wrecks,” performing menial and unfulfilling tasks. When Paul Proteus, the Works’ star engineer
becomes sensitive to the plight of the displaced common people, he participates in an underground movement to overthrow the Works. Although this major plotline and a generally distasteful opinion of EPICAC seem to expose Luddite tendencies, the complex and thoughtful nature of Vonnegut’s opinion betrays this impression.

*Player Piano*’s anti-climactic ending lends to the complexity of Vonnegut’s early views on technology. After the sabotage of the Works fails completely, the revolution’s four leaders, including Proteus, reminisce over their love of technology, agreeing that “Things don’t stay the way they are . . . it’s too entertaining to try to change them” (332). Here Vonnegut posits an essential characteristic of human beings: the constant desire to explore and experiment, even after complete failure. Although many theorists of Posthumanism would argue that the notion of any “essential characteristic” in human beings is dated and unreliable, the Posthuman invitations and explorations of Cyberpunk illustrate exactly the explorative human nature which Vonnegut effectively showcases.

By even-handedly portraying both the engineers’ natural desire to experiment and the repercussions of advanced scientific knowledge, Vonnegut does not condemn technology but merely observes its implications objectively. As a conscientious writer aiming to serve his society, Vonnegut condones the responsible implementation of technology, in ways that will improve life (human and otherwise) rather than disrupt it. One could apply this technological ideology to cyberfiction and a fully Posthuman society as well. Vonnegut would not have condemned the cyberworlds of Charles Gibson’s *Neuromancer* and Neil Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*, or the cyborgs of Bruce Sterling’s *Schismatrix* and Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, only for their existence; he would have questioned the ethical responsibility of their creation. Also, as a sharp satirist, Vonnegut demonstrates that technical innovations are often cleverly disguised methods of exploitation.

A barber, representing the “Reeks and Wrecks” in *Player Piano*, addresses the human desire for “adventure” as a means of feeling a sense of meaning or importance in one’s life. He says, “Used to be there was a lot of damn fool things a dumb bastard could do to be great, but the machines fixed that . . . now the machines take all the dangerous jobs, and the dumb bastards just get tucked away in big bunches of prefabs that look like the end of a game of Monopoly” (207). While such fascination with danger seems foolish
to most academic types, this kind of idealized “cowboy culture” is well-documented in the America’s history. This idealistic fantasy of adventure has been well documented in English culture as well, starting with seventeenth-century tales such as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. The barber’s attitude does not celebrate man’s fascination with adventure, but like Vonnegut, laments the fallacy of the pursuit of adventure and its ultimately devastating effect on the human beings who fall victim to it.

The framework of the adventure novel still exists as the foundation of many cyberpunk novels, including several I named two paragraphs earlier. E.L. McCallum effectively argues this point in her critical essay “Mapping the Real in Cyberfiction.” The most limiting factor in a discussion of “Cyberpunk,” she observes, is actually the adventure-based novels which characterize the genre. Novels such as Gibson’s *Neuromancer* generated a Cyberpunk fan base and spawned much critical interest and debate; the fact that Cyberpunk coincided with developing technologies and theories made its novels accessible for fans of literature (particularly science-fiction), hard science, and scientific theory. But the crucial cyberpunk novels are limited by the form of the novel itself, its roots in seventeenth-century England. The limiting boundaries of the novel include a reliance on a coherent plot featuring a sovereign subject, which inevitably subjects the text to politics of race and gender and often contains traces of the colonial imperialism around which the English novel first gained popularity.

Although *Player Piano* follows standard literary conventions, Vonnegut’s subsequent novels, beginning most significantly with *Cat’s Cradle* in 1963, increasingly scrutinized their own form, eventually overthrowing the conventions of the novel and evolving into post-modern literature. If the purpose of cyberpunk is to anticipate and experiment with the implementation of bold new technologies in human life and culture, then the most suitable format for cyberpunk should be one that is new. Davis suggests, “Because Vonnegut joins post-modern metafictional techniques with what upon first glance appears to be a modernist humanism, he remains an enigma and an anomaly in contemporary literature—a writer who bridges two disparate worlds, demonstrating the viability of a postmodern humanism” (150). While Vonnegut does not eliminate the form of the novel, he uses the novel itself to comment upon its own inadequacies, including the aforementioned reliance on plot which most often results in an “adventure.”
Vonnegut predicted the end of such adventure-tales in his second novel, *The Sirens of Titan*:

Mankind, ignorant of the truths that lie within every human being, looked outward—pushed ever outward. What mankind hoped to learn in its outward push was who was actually in charge of all creation . . . Mankind flung its advance agents ever outward . . . eventually it flung them out into space . . . These unhappy agents found what had already been found in abundance on Earth—a nightmare of meaninglessness without end. The bounties of space, of infinite outwardness, were three: empty heroics, low comedy, and pointless death. Outwardness lost, at last, its imagined attractions. Only inwardness remained to be explored. Only the human soul remained *terra incognita* (2).

One can easily see, even in the adventure novels of Gibson, Stephenson, and Sterling, the push towards the inward rather than the outward through the integration of cyber-space. Paradoxically, the cyber-worlds in these novels allow their protagonists greater freedom to explore and travel than the real world could ever grant them, yet they remain stubbornly fastened to the real world through the enabling technology as well as their physical bodies, or their “meat,” as Vonnegut (in *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater*, *Galapagos*, and *Bluebeard*) and many cyber-theorists, including McCallum, sometimes refer to the human body. As McCallum makes clear, the physical body remains central even in disembodied cyberfiction: “Not only is reality where the meat is—that is, human bodies, even in cyberfiction, have not sublated themselves to the purely virtual register—but real places still matter, still orient our understanding of cyberpunk texts” (351).

Once again, Vonnegut’s literature anticipated an important cyberpunk trend: introspection through disembodiment. Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, is “unstuck in time,” randomly revisiting moments in his life in disembodied form. Vonnegut places equal importance on the mental “life” of Pilgrim as well as his physical existence, the two sometimes being indistinguishable, much like in the virtual environments of cyberfiction. Pilgrim’s mind is plagued equally by the horrors of his experience as a prisoner-of-war and the American television culture of disembodied information to which he returns. With this Humanist novel addressing the harmful effects of a culture based on disembodied information, Vonnegut anticipated texts such as
Katherine Hayles’ important Posthumanist text, *How We Became Posthuman* (1999). Hayles writes, "Just because information has lost its body does not mean that humans and the world have lost theirs . . . increasingly the question is not whether we will become posthuman, for posthumanity is already here. Rather, the question is what kind of posthumans we will be." Hayles emphasizes the ethical implications of technological advancements, just as Vonnegut had been doing nearly a half-century before.

Vonnegut helped to usher in this Cyberpunk era in which the “adventure” turned its focus inward. In Cyberpunk fiction, the resolution of this search is often the true disembodiment of the human—achieving a higher form. One can see this climactic disembodiment in the conclusions of both *Schismatrix* and Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The solution in these scenarios is evolution of the human body into a disembodied and wholly unknowable form.

Evolution is a major theme in the critical discourse on cyberpunk fiction. New theories which argue against widely accepted Darwinism seem to continue the human tradition of seeking some kind of “truth,” but this new search for truth takes place within the confines of the human body, and more specifically, within the genetic makeup of the human. The first step in this venture is the crucial mapping of the genome; once the human genome is fully mapped and understood, the next logical step would seem to be conquering this microscopic physical structure through controlled evolution.

Leading Posthuman philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari present theories which argue that evolution occurs through mutation, rather than heredity; discussions of Cyberpunk frequently cite them as a result of their interest in evolutionary theory. Keeping with the generally Posthuman (implying post-gender and post-race) aesthetics of cyberficiton, their re-theorizing of evolution is an attempt to defeat, as Amit Rai suggests, the dominance of male semen. It is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari place more importance on the process of “becoming” than on the product. In “Becoming Intense,” they state, “What is real is the becoming itself . . . not the supposedly fixed terms through which that becoming passes” (238). While the theory within their most comprehensive text, *A Thousand Plateaus*, is primarily philosophical, the evolutionary suggestions of Vonnegut in *Galapagos* serve as an interesting exploration of the “product” which is downplayed in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. I
will use *Galapagos* as a case of speculative fiction regarding the material implications of “Becoming Intense.”

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the gateway to evolving is first “becoming woman,” positing that females are historically and biologically more adaptable to change and mutation: “Becoming-woman, more than any other becoming, possesses a special introductory power; it is not so much that women are witches, but that sorcery proceeds by way of this becoming-woman” (248). For this controversial theory, critics often accuse Deleuze and Guattari of fetishizing women. I am prone to agree with this criticism; instead of engaging with the progressive Feminist theory of Donna Haraway, who suggests that "there is nothing about being female that naturally binds women together into a unified category. There is not even such a state as 'being' female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices," (155) they assign the gender a reductive biological definition which reintroduces the female body as an object of desire.

The theories of Deleuze and Guattari in the important *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) informed and inspired cyberfiction, but in 1985, closer to cyberpunk’s inception, Vonnegut published *Galapagos*. This novel seemingly agrees with the theories Darwin had set forth, yet it strangely also reflects the mutative theories of Deleuze and Guattari. The novel, which follows a small group of humans and their descendants over the course of a million years, looking all the way back to 1986, sees these humans evolve into “seal-like creatures” complete with flippers and furry hides. The first seal-like child is in development even before the small group reaches the island from which they begin to repopulate the world, so the only logical explanation for the child’s characteristics is mutation.

Vonnegut’s interpretation of evolution seems to imply that Darwin’s theories do work—but that we must also consider the aspect of mutation in a balanced exploration. Vonnegut wisely avoids complete subscription to any one theory. Anya Plutynski explains, “Recent work illustrates how biological explanation is a multi-level task, requiring both a top-down approach to understanding how a pattern of inheritance or trait might be maintained in populations, as well as bottom-up modeling of the dynamics of
gene expression” (1). The future of evolution will most likely resemble a combination of many different theories.

*Galapagos* seems to reinforce Deleuze and Guattari’s argument that females are more biologically adaptable (the first seal-child, Akiko, is female). However, Vonnegut’s own vision of ways in which human beings might manipulate evolution subverts the dominance of male semen in ways which do not fall victim to the fetishism of Deleuze and Guattari. In order to continue life on the island, reproduction between males and females must be enacted. The island’s only fertile male has no interest, however, in reproducing and fornicates only with the sterile Mary Hepburn. Hepburn, understanding that reproduction is necessary to continue life, secretly takes the semen of the Captain after intercourse in order to impregnate the island’s only fertile females, the teenage Kankabono girls. Although one may argue that this kind of reliance on semen is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari protest, Vonnegut shows that ownership of semen does not necessarily imply power. Instead of the male Captain, the female Hepburn begins the process of reproduction. Vonnegut’s creative exploration of alternative methods of reproduction reveals his gender-progressive politics, which nicely complement those of Donna Haraway. As I have stated before, this kind of post-gender ideology is a crucial element in the Posthuman ideology of Cyberpunk.

In addition to expressing an ideology which agrees with the essential tenets of Posthumanism, *Galapagos* also avoids one of the most troubling elements of cyberfiction: the sovereign subject. The novel contains no main protagonist; its plot is instead objectively narrated by the ghost of an American soldier, Leon Trout, who was accidentally decapitated in the 1960s. Although one could argue that Trout is the most traditional sovereign subject, the white male, his access to a million years of human activity allow him to escape the trappings of race and gender. Trout’s disembodied existence seems to imply that he has achieved a kind of complete objectivity, which Vonnegut consistently reflects as author.

*Galapagos* not only engages with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “becoming woman,” but it also addresses their and Brian Massumi’s concept of “becoming animal.” It does so by humans’ evolution into seal-like creatures. Trout views humans no differently when they resemble seals than when they resemble the humans that we know,
a million years prior to the vantage point from which he narrates the novel. One can predict that if the course of human evolution had taken another path to a society of cyborgs and A.I.-enhanced robots, Trout would narrate with the same objective viewpoint. Vonnegut grants humans no special privilege. In fact, humans are the living things which Vonnegut most harshly criticizes in *Galapagos*; he repeatedly criticizes the human brain as being impractical and destructive: “Can it be doubted that three-kilogram brains were once nearly fatal defects in the evolution of the human race?” (9).

By envisioning a future in which humans’ brains literally decrease in size as a means of survival, Vonnegut challenges the vision of all cyberfiction. In addition to examining the possible course which future technology might take, Vonnegut also questions the rationality of those technological innovations. *Galapagos* suggests that perhaps the most logical solution to the dystopian problems of the Cyberpunk world would be an evolutionary step backwards.

Vonnegut objected to his early characterization as a science-fiction author. He argued that the literary establishment viewed science-fiction authors negatively and complained that “I have been a soreheaded occupant of a file drawer labeled ‘science fiction’ . . . and I would like out, particularly since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal” (Science-fiction 1). Cyberpunk as science-fiction still falls victim to the same critical bias. As I have illustrated, the work of Vonnegut consistently avoids the trappings of science-fiction through astute social commentary and the application of secular Humanist ethics which do not condemn Posthuman ideologies but actually create a foundation for them. Vonnegut also avoids the traditional criticisms of Humanism, providing a framework for the rational ethics of a Posthumanist philosophy.
Conclusion: Vonnegut in the Future

Throughout his life Vonnegut covered a broad range of culturally relevant topics, from the oblivious banality of popular 1950s to current evolutionary politics. But whether referring directly to his own American culture or inventing cultures like that of the little green Tralfamadorians, Vonnegut always aims for the reader’s conscience. With his insistent appeal to the heart and mind of the reader, Vonnegut will continue to influence and inspire generations to come. His unpublished works are valuable additions to a remarkable canon; fortunately, some of these works will not remain unpublished for long.

On April 1, 2008, Putnam Books will publish Armageddon in Retrospect, the first posthumous collection of Vonnegut’s work. Among several non-fiction essays by Vonnegut, this text contains ten unpublished short stories drawn from the Lilly Library. In an advance review, critic Karlheinz Halter praises “Happy Birthday, 1951,” albeit for an “unbearably poignant” conclusion; he dismisses the other nine selections as “previously unpublished for good reason; they are repetitive and predictable, little more than discarded shavings from the rich sculptures of Vonnegut's major works.” When I began my research at the Lilly Library, I initially felt a similar apprehension about the value of Vonnegut’s unpublished work; as my intensive study continued, however, I began to appreciate the historical importance of these freshly unearthed texts. In my thesis, I have attempted to prove that although Vonnegut’s unpublished short stories do not contain the cohesive brilliance of his published work, they are valuable texts which in many ways contribute to a greater understanding of Vonnegut’s entire body of literature. I predict that the ever growing pool of Vonnegut scholars will excitedly agree with my assessment of the unpublished material. In four brief chapters, I have covered only a fraction of the possible approaches to Vonnegut’s newly available materials; scholars will assuredly employ many different methods of analysis on the same texts.

Tellingly, while I drew from a wide swath of Vonnegut scholarship in my research, there are many excellent pieces of Vonnegut analysis which I do not engage here. For example, Lawrence R. Broer’s Sanity Plea: Schizophrenia in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut focuses on the psychological aspects of Vonnegut’s literature. Published in 1989, while Vonnegut was still writing actively, Broer’s work demonstrates that even in his late period, Vonnegut was tackling many different issues of contentious cultural
debate, in this case mental illness. Considering the psychological themes present in many of Vonnegut’s unpublished short stories, including the one from which the forthcoming *Apocalypse in Retrospect* draws its name, the role of mental illness in Vonnegut’s work is a particular strand of Vonnegut scholarship which will thrive on new texts.

Vonnegut’s commitment to effective literary style is another major aspect of his fiction which I mention only in passing. Although Vonnegut’s unpublished short stories are rarely adventurous stylistically, they do provide important links in the early development of his trademark style. Much scholarship has been devoted to Vonnegut’s groundbreaking work within the context of Postmodernism. Vonnegut’s compelling experiments with innovative storytelling are ripe for juxtaposition with his more conventional value systems, making for interesting essays such as Todd F. Davis’ “Apocalyptic Grumbling: Postmodern Humanism in the Work of Kurt Vonnegut.” As the literary world increasingly accepts and employs Postmodern techniques, the fundamental work of Vonnegut will remain a cornerstone of this artistic evolution.

Vonnegut’s engagement with theories of evolution, which I have discussed in the last chapter of this thesis, will also keep his voice relevant in the future. The topic of evolution has in the last several decades been one of heated cultural debate, fixed on the battle between atheistic notions of Darwinism and traditional religious accounts of “Creationism,” a term coined specifically to contrast Darwinism. Articles regarding this cultural struggle regularly make appear in major newspapers and magazines, often focusing on the ethical responsibilities of schoolteachers within this contentious gray-zone between science and religion. Vonnegut is no stranger to debates on censorship; *Slaughterhouse-Five* was widely banned from school libraries in the 1970s for what some considered lewd and inappropriate content. Just as the anti-war content of that novel alluded to the highly relevant cultural debate that was the Vietnam War, *Galapagos* directly faces many aspects of the current evolutionary debate.

Vonnegut continued with this direct approach to important issues in his latest works. Scholars have yet to fully address some of Vonnegut’s already-published works, including his last three books—*Timequake; God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian;* and *A Man Without a Country.* Although Vonnegut famously made himself a character in *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions,* he is the primary character in these
three late texts. Of the three, Timequake, which he divides evenly between a fictional tale and personal narration, is closest to a classic Vonnegut novel. Dr. Kevorkian follows Vonnegut as he interviews some of history’s most infamous figures. Finally, A Man Without a Country, the last work which Vonnegut lived to see published, is purely Vonnegut’s voice, freely commenting upon the culture in which he lives at the end of a long and storied life. Vonnegut’s novels always contain an element of social consciousness; in his last book, he cuts out the fiction entirely and gets straight to the underlying messages which embody his entire body of literature. Most notably, Vonnegut expresses environmental concerns for Earth, and condemns the political figures who allow for the gradual destruction of the planet. Vonnegut suggests an epitaph for the planet Earth: “‘We could have saved it, but we were too damned cheap and lazy.’” As the world collectively races towards means of preventing ecological disaster and the looming threat of global warming, Vonnegut’s final haunting condemnation of eco-politics lingers in a highly relevant cultural discourse.

Vonnegut did not limit his engagement with environmental issues only to his later works. Even in early short stories such as “Deer in the Works,” Vonnegut shows a concern for the way in which mechanization violently displaces the order of the natural world. Vonnegut’s distrust of mechanical progress extends to its effect on the value of human life in Player Piano; here, Vonnegut mourns the loss of manual labor jobs to increasingly advanced machines. In today’s climate of increasingly rapid technological developments, more human jobs are displaced in favor of machines. Each year, the job markets of the world look a little more like the machine-driven dystopia of Player Piano. As Vonnegut’s fictional predictions of the future become more real, he may increasingly take on the role of a cultural prophet much like George Orwell.

Vonnegut’s robust body of literature has left a lasting mark; as a result, Vonnegut’s work also lives on increasingly as films and plays. In the past few months, new stage productions of Slaughterhouse-Five and Cat’s Cradle have debuted, garnering reviews in The New York Times. Mother Night and Breakfast of Champions have been adapted to film in recent years, adding to the Vonnegut film canon which began with director George Roy Hill’s well-received film adaptation of Slaughterhouse-Five (1972). Although the quality of these adaptations, particularly the most recent, are spotty at best,
Vonnegut’s body of work remains open to reinterpretations in many different formats. In this way, Vonnegut’s stories may be retold in increasingly audio-visual cultures. Kevin Boon and David Pringle lead the way in this budding branch of Vonnegut scholarship, contributing a chapter titled “Vonnegut Films” to At Millenium’s End, the latest collection of Vonnegut studies.

Vonnegut will not be remembered only for his writing; throughout his career Vonnegut also established a distinct style of visual art. A drawing of a locket hanging between Montana Wildhack’s breasts in Slaughterhouse-Five is the first instance of visual art in any of Vonnegut’s novels. Vonnegut’s next novel, Breakfast of Champions, is loaded with the author’s own felt-tip marker drawings, often comically crude. Although some critics have dismissed the inclusion of this artwork as shameless gimmickry, Peter suggests instead that Vonnegut’s drawings “are part of-and draw attention to-the seemingly naive, even adolescent, perspective by which Vonnegut deconstructs and demystifies American culture and society in this novel” (Fantastic). Whether loved or hated, the drawings within Breakfast of Champions drew attention to Vonnegut’s unique artwork. In the following decades Vonnegut further embraced his artistic inclinations, drawing and painting as a fun hobby to contrast his more intensive writing; he leaves behind a dozen or more significant pieces of visual art, discussed at length in Reed’s essay, “Kurt Vonnegut’s Fantastic Faces.” The visual artwork of Kurt Vonnegut is yet another element of Vonnegut’s career which invites further scholarship.

Vonnegut’s discussion of art within his short stories, novels, and essays also yields much fruitful scholarship. Essays such as David Andrews’ “Vonnegut and Aesthetic Humanism” have already established a scholarly discussion of Vonnegut’s views toward the culture of visual art. Andrews primarily discusses Vonnegut’s 1987 novel Bluebeard, which tells the story of Rabo Karabekian, an aging abstract-expressionist painter. A concern for the true nature of art is present, however, throughout the whole of Vonnegut’s published and unpublished catalog. “The Humbugs” an unpublished story which I did not discuss, pursues the same questions about the true nature of art that Vonnegut would later confront in Bluebeard. Fates Worse than Death contains a biographical essay titled “Jackson Pollock,” one of the most integral and influential artists within the field of abstract-expressionism. Considering Vonnegut’s
consistent interest in the culture of visual art, it is no wonder that he eventually began making more of his own art. Whether in discussion of the art within Vonnegut’s literature or of his own ventures into visual art, the subject of art within Kurt Vonnegut presents many opportunities for future Vonnegut scholarship. The work of Vonnegut is no less than art itself, collections of words, symbols, and images which work together to evoke a response from the audience. As the world continues to change, Vonnegut’s work will always challenge the thoughts and emotions of anyone with whom it comes in contact—the mark of a true artist.
Works Cited


Haraway, Donna. “Cyborg Manifesto.”


Hayles, Katherine. “How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics.”


Lovecraft, H.P. “The Call of Cthulu.”


Plutynski, Anya. "Explaining how and explaining why: developmental and evolutionary explanations of dominance." *Biology and Philosophy*, (In press; Published online Dec. 2006)


---. "Armageddon in Retrospect.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

---. "Atrocity Story." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.


---. "Beeline, Inc." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

---. "The Briefcase." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

---. "Brighten Up!" Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.


---. “Confido.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.


---. "Damon and Pythias." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.


---. “A Dresden Goodnight.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

---. "The Drone King." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “The Epizootic.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

59-75.
---. “Four Utterly Honest People.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "FUBAR." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN. 1959.
---. "The Genius Club." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “Great Day.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Guns Before Butter." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “Hall of Mirrors.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Happy Birthday, 1951." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Hundred Dollar Kisses." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN. 1960.
---. “Ice-9.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "I Shall Not Want." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Jenny." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Just You and Me, Sammy." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Land of Opportunity." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Little Drops of Water." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “Look at the Birdie.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "The Man Without No Kiddleys." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Miss Snow, You're Fired." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN. 1960.
---. "Money Talks." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "The Nice Little People." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “Outline for Science Fiction Novel.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Paris, France." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Parts Unknown." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “The Petrified Ants.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "The Pit." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Please Omit Flowers." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "The Poisner." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “Robotville and Mr. Caslow.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Ruth." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. “Shelter-Hopping.” Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Shout About It From the Housetops." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN. 1960.
---. "Slice of Life." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN. 1957.
---. "Spoils." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.
---. "Wailing Shall be in All the Streets." Ms. Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.