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NOTES ON THE INTERACTION OF COMEDY AND TRAGEDY IN CHAUCER

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Any definition of Chaucer's vision (his view of human affairs in the world) must account for the fact that he writes in several genres. Several of The Canterbury Tales have quite properly been labeled "romances"; other have been called "saints legends"; many are examples of comic "fabliaux"; Troilus and Criseyde is a tragedy; "The Monk's Tale" is a series of tragedies; "Sir Thopas" can be called satire; "The Knight's Tale" could be considered a kind of epic; and several of Chaucer's poems are lyrics. In spite of this extraordinarily large number of different genres, two genres, comedy and tragedy, form a useful polarity for understanding Chaucer. His vision includes both, as some of his works involve primarily comic movements, some trace tragic movements, and several have both types of movements within the same work. This paper is primarily interested in this last category, and will attempt to show that the intermingling of elements of both comedy and tragedy in certain works is indicative of and accomplished by Chaucer's establishing multiple points of view towards his material. The strategy of the paper will be first to show that Chaucer is aware of comedy and tragedy as opposites, and interested in the possibilities of their interaction. Next Chaucer's conceptions of the two genres will be discussed, and that will be followed by discussions of the works in which both comic and tragic elements are important. It will then be

possible to see how the interaction of these opposite genres helps to define a consistant vision.

That Chaucer is aware of the poles of tragedy and comedy seems evident in one of his earliest works, The Book of the Duchess. The stories of Seys and Alcyone, and of the Black Knight and Lady White, both concern the extremes of woe and bliss. In both relationships the bliss of requited love is followed by woe when one of the lovers dies. Yet although both of these love stories focus on the characters' woe, the poem is not without joy. The moral of the tale of Alcyone's suffering, "To lytel while oure blysse lasteth!" (211),[1] is consoling to all who have lost a lover (specifically to John of Gaunt) because it implies that such a loss is common, and because it suggests that while Seys was alive, both lovers were in bliss at the moment of requited love. Similarly, the elaborated description of how the Black Knight won his lady, in spite its sombre tone, traces a movement from "wo to wele" (as Chaucer terms a similar movement in Troilus and Criseyde); and as in Troilus and Criseyde, the lady's early refusals are gradually overcome, and eventually she grants "mercy."

The narrator, too, seems to experience both joy and woe. At the beginning of the poem he is unable to sleep and has

"suffred this eight yeer,/ And yet his boote is never the ner" (37-38). His suffering seems to be that of a lover who has not yet won his lady, as his "phisicien" seems to be the commonplace metaphor for a lady: "For there is phisicien but oon/ That may me hele" (39-40). However, he seems unwilling to accept the woe of others. Though he narrates the story of Seys and Alcyone he misses the clear moral of the tale, and instead jokingly compiles a list of gifts he would offer Morpheus as payment for giving him sleep. His responses to the Black Knight's sorrow also seem light-hearted, though sympathetic, as he attempts to cheer the Black Knight. And the end of the poem is a joyful contrast to its woeful beginning:

> Thoughte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven
> That I wol, by processe of tyme,
> Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
> As I kan best, and that anoon."
> This was my sweven; now hit ys doon. (1330-1334)

Had Chaucer chosen to write exclusively about either the joy or the woe of the lovers, he would have written pure comedy or pure tragedy, and used a more consistant narrator to sustain a more even tone. But instead, he wishes to use both genres for other purposes. The Book of the Duchess will be more fully discussed later, but it is sufficient for the immediate purposes of the paper to demonstrate that from the beginning of his writing career Chaucer recognizes that comedy and tragedy are opposite possibilities, and that he

shows that both are part of life.

The antithesis of comedy and tragedy is explicitly discussed near the end of Troilus and Criseyde. The poem is clearly a tragedy, since a single joy in Book III is surrounded by a "double sorwe," but while he calls it a tragedy, he also wishes to write a counterbalancing comedy:

> Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,
> Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
> So sende myght to make in som comedye! (V,1786-1788)

Frequently, he combines the two genres, agreeing with Pandarus' suggestion: "of two contraries is o lore" (I,645).

In order to be more precise about Chaucer's vision it is necessary to more fully define his conceptions of comedy and tragedy. Others have done considerable work in this area and their efforts will be of aid in clarifying the views taken in this paper. Although Chaucer cannot be equated with his Monk, "The Monk's Tale" is one of the simplest examples of Chaucerian tragedy. The Monk starkly outlines seventeen tragedies and repeatedly emphasizes the high position of the tragic victim and the irrational nature of Fortune. The fickleness of Fortune is clearly the basis of his view of tragedy. As Willard Farnham says:

> Most of the Monk's efforts are open-and-shut tragedies showing how Fortune at her pleasure overthrows the innocent and the wicked alike. It is true that Adam fell through misconduct, Samson erred fatally in telling his secret to a woman, and others, especially Antiochus, fell both through the operations of Fortune and through pride, the sin to which fortunate people are most prone and

> which God, to show man's weakness, particularly allows Fortune to chasten. But Hercules, Zenobia, Pedro of Spain, Pedro of Cyprus, Bernabo of Lombardy, Ugolino of Pisa, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar were entirely free from tragic sin or fault and fell through no cause but Fortune's aversion of her face. Nero, even while he was most wicked, had Fortune's favor for a while and fell merely because she changed, though she did offer his vicious character as an excuse for her turning against him.[2]

In the cases of Adam, Samson, Antiochus, and Nero, the Monk clearly has an opportunity to expand his theory of Fortune's simple arbitrariness, but as Farnham claims: "One has the feeling that he is never getting far away from his teaching that misfortunes have no rational causes and are to be expected simply because the world is a vale of tears."[3] But by insisting that tragedy is merely a result of inconstant Fortune, the Monk hopes to teach the lesson which implicitly lies behind this De Casibus conception of the genre:

> The active man is responsible for any disaster that comes to him, but only because he chooses in the first place to enter the world of endeavor. Thereafter, his voluntary actions would seem to have little bearing upon his mortal fate. He has subjected himself to Fortune and she abases him at her pleasure-or she does not abase him, if the whim suits her. The only sure course is to give-up, and to hold in scorn, the world of ambition."[4]

And by emphasizing the greatness, or at least high stature, of all of his tragic victims, the Monk makes more emphatic his point that worldly power and position is no safeguard against Fortune.

But the Monk's conception of tragedy is not necessarily Chaucer's: Chaucer uses the Monk's series of tragedies to establish the Monk's character and way of viewing life. The Monk is interested in the abstract principle of Fortune, but he is never able to relate it specifically to any morality; once one enters the "world of ambition," morality does not necessarily determine a man's fate, for moral and immoral men are equally subject to Fortune. Though his tragedies maintain that one should shun everything worldly, he loves the worldly pleasures of hunting and eating, and instead seems to shun the strictness of his order, as the imagery of "The General Prologue" suggests:

> And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
> Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere
> And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle.
> (I,169-171)

Similarly, he is unable to see the clear moral lesson of the fall of Lucifer. Lucifer does not fit his theory that Fortune is the cause of tragic falls, because being an angel he is not subject to Fortune. That his fall prefigures the falls of men because, like theirs, it is caused by sin, seems to escape the Monk:

> At Lucifer, though he an angel were,
> And nat a man, at hym wol I bigynne.
> For though Fortune may noon angel dere,
> From heigh degree yet fel he for his synne
> Doun into helle, where he yet is inne.
> O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,
> Now artow Sathanas, that mayst nat twynne
> Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.
> (VII,1999-2006)

Because of the Monk's hypocrisy and because his tragedies have no moral lesson for those who chose not to " scorn the world of ambition," he is tiresome to the pilgrims and is interrupted by the Knight.

R.E. Kaske, in "The Knight's Interruption of 'The Monk's Tale,'" argues that through the Knight, Chaucer indicates he does not accept the Monk's version of the workings of Fortue. [5] According to Kaske, Chaucer attempts to represent Boethius' philosophy of Fortune, and therefore has the Knight protest the Monk's simple-minded view. Though it seems doubtful that Chaucer is interested in a point by point demonstration of parts of The Consolation of Philosophy (rather he uses exerpts from Boethius to show a character's state of mind), it is clear that through the Knight, Chaucer notes limitations in the Monk's view.

A more reliable definition of Chaucerian tragedy is his gloss to the translation of Boethius: "tragedye is to seyn a dite of a prosperite for a tyme, that endeth in wrecchidnesse" (BkII, pr.2). Even according to this simple definition the Monk's tragedies are inadequate, for they consider only the fall of the tragic victim, and not his "prosperite for a tyme." The prosperity of the Monk's victims is implied, but is not really a part of any of the seventeen stories.

However, the conception of tragedy in Troilus and Criseyde

is also far more complex than the simple definition in the Boethius gloss. A fundamental critical question about the conception of tragedy in Troilus is how and to what degree Troilus is responsible for his own downfall. There is little critical agreement on this question, as each critic seems to have his own view. Walter Clyde Curry maintains that Troilus' tragic fault "lies in the fact that his passions leave him unable to exercise his free-will in transcending the destinal decrees promulgated by Nature and the stars."[6] Howard R. Patch sees a double fault in Troilus:

> Troilus was guilty of sinning against the Court of Love, and was punished by Criseyde's infidelity; from the Christian point of view, he was guilty of yielding to blind pleasure, and he suffered.[7]

And D.W. Robertson is emphatic about limiting Troilus' failure to a Christian failure:

> By the close of Book III, he (Troilus) has been distracted by "good" fortune to the point that he has no freedom left with which to avoid the ensuing adversities. He reaches a point at which there is "no remedie." His doom thus becomes a matter of destiny, or providence, since he loses the power to transcend Fortune.[8]

All three critics agree that Troilus loses sight of Divinity, and therefore forfeits his free-will, which would have otherwise been capable of transcending Fortune. Troilus' fault is that he trusted in the worldly, rather than in God.

But Chaucer does not harshly condemn Troilus for making his mistake. His love for Criseyde is a tragic mistake only because he choses an imperfect good over a perfect one. In

his song at the end of Book III Troilus certainly sees his love as a reflection of God's love:

> "So wolde God, that auctour is of kynde,
> That with his bond Love of his vertu liste
> To cerclen hertes al, and faste bynde,
> That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste:
> And hertes colde, hem wolde I that he twiste
> To make hem love, and that hem liste ay rewe
> On hertes sore, and kepe hem that ben trewe!"
> (III,1765-1771)

And rather than moralistically contradicting Troilus' view, the narrator reinforces it. After Troilus' ironic scoffing at love is reversed by his falling in love with Criseyde, the narrator applauds Troilus and warns those who laugh at him:

> Forthy ensample taketh of this man,
> Ye wise, proude, and worthi folkes alle,
> To scornen Love, which that so soone kan
> The fredom of youre hertes to hym thralle;
> For evere it was, and evere it shal byfalle,
> That Love is he that alle thing may bynde,
> For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde. (I,232-238)

And the narrator, too, sees love as the image of God in his prologue to Book III:

> God leveth, and to love wol nought werne:
> And in this world no lyves creature
> Withouten love is worth, or may endure. (III,12-14)

Although this kind of earthly love is the "feynede" love rejected at the end of the poem, it is not unacceptable because it is bad in itself, but because it is not the perfect version of love, the love of Christ. Earthly love is linked to other sorts of natural and cosmic harmonies (even sexual love follows the Law of Kind) and therefore cannot be too simply

condemned. Finally both Troilus and the narrator move from imperfect, "[illegible]," earthly love to the love of God: Troilus gets to the eighth sphere, and Chaucer brings his readers to the Trinity, Christ, and Mary.

Even though the hero's tragic fault is explicit in Troilus and Criseyde, it is not unlike the implicit faults of the victims of the Monk's De Casibus tragedies. With the exception of Lucifer, each of the Monk's victims also fell because he trusted in the worldly, and did not shun earthly pleasure in favor of contemplative freedom.

But the genre of tragedy is significantly developed, though not redefined, in Troilus. The hero's fault is made an important part of the story, and the moral of his fall is explicit. It is impossible to miss the Christian moral of Troilus (as the Monk misses the morals of the falls he describes), whereas the implicit morality of The Monk's Tale is more obscure. The most significant development, however, is that the tragedy is made dramatic; it has characters, action, and dramatic movement (from woe to well and back to woe), and it involves the responses of an audience. Sympathy for Troilus is evoked throughout; when he suffers he is meant to be pitied; when his love is requited his happiness is felt by the audience. The poem also suggests that there can be private tragedies as well as public ones.[9] Troilus' love for Criseyde is known only by the lovers and Pandarus,

but is nevertheless tragic, and illustrative of an important moral. Because the immediate emphasis of the tragedy is upon morality, any man can be tragic and the hero's fall need not be of great political significance; instead, a political situation precipitates the disaster; effect is made cause.

In Troilus and Criseyde Chaucer is also concerned with the various possibilities of style. His is not always a high style, as traditional rules would dictate. There are many moments of lightness, and even comedy, in the poem, but these do not destroy its over-all seriousness. A contrast in the behavioural and verbal styles of the characters allows Chaucer to take several views of his subject simultaneously, but that does not mean seriousness is lost. Pandarus' intentional light-heartedness in Book II, for example, serves to emphasize the depth of Troilus' woe. Variations of style are part of the dramatic quality of the poem, and Chaucer modifies the rule of tragic elevated style for his own serious purposes.

The rule of style is also modified in some Chaucerian comedy. Just as in Troilus and Criseyde Chaucer can expand the definition of tragedy from the gloss of Boethius, he can also elaborate Medieval conceptions of comedy. For Chaucer comedy need not concern only lowly, crude characters and need not be told in an exclusively low or mean style.

But before Chaucer's modifications of Medieval comedy are considered, a basic definition of the genre should be established. Since Chaucer considers comedy the opposite of tragedy (as the previously quoted lines from Troilus suggest) (V,1786-8) it seems logical to define comedy in terms of tragedy. As tragedy traces a movement from "prosperite" to "wrecchidness," comedy traces the opposite movement from "wrecchidness" to "prosperite," or from "wo to wele." Dante's definition of comedy is very similar to this one in its simplicity and its content: "comedy begins with sundry adverse conditions, but ends happily."[10] The literal meaning of comedy, "rustic song," suggests additional attributes of the genre.[11] Comedy was generally understood to involve crude or rustic characters, and to maintain a predominantly light tone. The style considered appropriate to comedy was a low, or possibly mean, style. Dante goes so far as to claim that the style fitting for comedy is "unstudied and lowly."[12]

There are additional ways in which Chaucerian comedy is an inversion of tragedy. As it is not absolutely necessary, but certainly more effective, to create sympathy for the tragic hero, it is not manditory, but is more effective, to distance comic characters from the audience. This is certainly apparent in the fabliaux; there can be no serious sympathy for Nicholas, Absolon, or John the carpenter

in "The Miller's Tale." The Miller treats none of his characters seriously or sympathetically: John the carpenter is "sely," a "rich gnof," excessively jealous, and foolish in believing Nicholas' astrology; both Nicholas and Absolon are more interested in sex than in piousness or learning; and Alison is immature and unsure of herself (though she seems to fare better than the others). The three male characters become surprised victims of "japes," but the audience has superior knowledge and sees in advance how the foolishness of each character leads to his deserved victimization. Because of the initial lack of sympathy for the characters, the superiority of the audience, and the lack of serious damage from the "japes," the characters are not pitied and the tone remains light throughout the tale.

Though "The Clerk's Tale" violates many of these "rules," it, too, can be considered comic. In the prologue the Host asks the Clerk to tell an adventurous tale, and to leave his high style and important subject for some other time.

> Telle us som murie thyng of aventures.
> Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
> Keepe hem in stoor til so be that ye endite
> Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.
> Speketh so preye at this time, we yow preye,
> That we may understonde what ye seye. (IV,15-20)

The Host implies that certain subject matter dictates a certain style, but the Clerk manages to tell a serious tale in an understandable, mean style. But in spite of its seriousness, the tale does have the lightness which the Host demands.

It fits the structural comic formula in describing "wrecchidness" for a time, and ending in "prosperite." The initial lowly status of Griselde is also appropriate for Medieval comedy.

However, the structure of comedy, and the emotional release inherent in the comic solution, are accomplished without distancing the heroine from the audience and without the tale being morally insignificant. Griselde is extremely sympathetic, and pitied throughout the tale. Even though it becomes clear that her children are alive, and that her situation is able to be remedied, the audience pities her immediate suffering, and feels some anger toward Walter for causing such unnecessary suffering. Because Griselde is sympathetic the emotional release of the ending is even greater than that in more traditionally comic tales like the fabliaux.

Rather than destroying the possibility for seriousness, the movement from "wrecchidness" to "prosperite" in "The Clerk's Tale," increases the power of the double moral. That a husband could be the cause of such "wrecchidness" for his wife convinces wives to demand fair treatment from husbands, and patience seems to be a more attractive virtue because "prosperite" is made part of the tale.

The Knight, too, would seem to be interested in comedy that can have a serious moral. His interruption of

the Monk clearly shows his preference for comedy over tragedy:

> I seye for me, it is a greet disese,
> Whereas men han been in greet welthe and ese,
> To heeren of hire sodeyn fal, allas!
> And the contrarie is joye and greet solas,
> As whan a man hath been in povre estaat,
> And clymbeth up and wexeth fortunat,
> And there abideth in prosperitee.
> Swich thyng is gladsom, as it thynketh me,
> And of swich thyng were goodly for to telle.
> (VII,2771-2779)

But "The Knight's Tale" had shown that he could be quite serious. Though this seems to be a contradiction in the Knight's character, his interruption makes good sense when his actual objections to the Monk are considered. As Kaske suggests, the Knight is really objecting to the Monk's presentation of Fortune.[13] He sees the other side of Fortune; it can increase worldly prosperity, as well as ruin it. The Monk's tragedies present only one aspect of Fortune; in turn, the Knight demands to hear of the other side through comedy. In doing this the Knight implies that comedy can present a view of Fortune which is as equally valid, serious, philosophical, and profound, as the view presented by tragedy.

The Knight's interruption has another serious function, as it shows Chaucer's reluctance to present tragedy without also presenting comedy. As is characteristic in his work, one must balance the other. Frequently the two are played against each other to create ambiguities and complexities

which are not inherent in either.

In "The Knight's Tale" elements of both tragedy and comedy have been discovered and discussed by critics, most of whom maintain that the tale is serious, but not really tragic. The tale concerns noble, dignified characters, and until Part Three it appears that neither Palamon or Arcite will win Emelye. Finally, after long suffering, Arcite wins the tournament, but suddenly falls from joy to woe, and subsequently dies as a result of serving the wrong god. And the tale does have a very serious moral. But because of Palamon's success it clearly cannot be considered pure tragedy.

A few of the critics have recognized the comedy of the tale as well. Preston[14] and Neuse[15] think that the work has been taken far too seriously and H.S. Wilson views it as primarily a comedy:

> . . . it is not a competition of rival merits that is being presented to us, but an exemplum of the power of love which overrules all fellowship, even that of the truest of knights and devoted friends.[16]

(Shakespeare, too, saw many elements of comedy in the tale, as it is a basis for A Midsummer Night's Dream). Although these three critics seem to ignore the serious aspects of the tale, they are right in noticing many of its comic qualities. Here, as elsewhere, Chaucer's basic technique for comedy is the juxtapositioning of one point of view against

another . Palamon and Arcite are seen not only from their own point of view, but are obvibously under the merciful, benevolent control of Theseus, the pagan gods, and the First Mover, all of whom try to help the lovers. When this benevolent control is seen the lovers' dilemma is not really terrifying. The audience is sympathetic to them, but views their suffering from a distance, and is not distressed by it. But the tale is narrated in such a way as to balance the seriousness and the humour with which the lovers are viewed; both tragic and comic elements remain important.

The Knight's style clearly shows this balance; he does not treat his material as pure comedy or pure tragedy. There are many examples where his style changes from "high style" to "mean style." His early metaphor for his act of story-telling, "I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,/ And wayke been the oxen in my plough" (I,886-887), certainly lightens the high style he has sustained to that point, and it indicates that the tale will not be as grave as the first lines about Theseus might suggest. After having established the suffering of Palamon and Arcite, he again lessens the seriousness of his tone:

> Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely
> His martirdom? for sooth it am nat I;
> Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.(I,1459-1461)

The Knight's tone is also light when he shows that the actions

of Palamon and Arcite are a normal part of noble, courtly life:[17]

> For every wight that lovede chivalrye,
> And wolde, his thankes, han a passant name,
> Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;
> . . .
> To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!
> It were a lusty sighte for to see. (I,2106-2116)

But for the most part the Knight treats his characters quite seriously; he emphasizes that nobility of Theseus, Ypolita, and Emelye, and recognizes the dignified positions of the "two yonge knyghtes," Palamon and Arcite. He continually evokes sympathy for the two lovers by accurately describing their sufferings in his high and serious style. However, he fails to take full advantage of all of the pathos of their situation; he refuses to make their pain truly tragic. Once he establishes the point that they are in a state of woe, he cuts himself short, and discusses something else:

> Yow loveres axe I now this questioun:
> Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
> That oon may seen his lady day by day,
> But in prison he moot dwelle alway;
> That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
> But seen his lady shall he nevere mo.
> Now demeth as yow liste, ye that kan,
> For I wol telle forth as I bigan. (I,1347-1354)
>
> What sholde I al day of his wo endite? (I,1380)
>
> His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther,
> As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher.
> Therefore I stynte, I am no divinistre;
> Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,
> Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
> Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.

> Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye!
> Now wol I speken forth of Emelye. (I,2809-2816)

However, these examples are perfectly consistant with the Knight's comments in his interruption of the Monk. He maintains a predominantly serious tone, but he does not want his tale to become "hevynesse" and "a greet disease." Potential tragedy is not fully developed.

Perhaps an even more significant function of the Knight's narration is to imply that the actions of Palamon and Arcite should be considered from other points of view. Although Palamon and Arcite repeatedly refer to the control over them exerted by pagan gods, Cupid, and astral destiny, the Knight's comments are the first fully convincing indications of the truth of the lovers' claims. The Knight holds Cupid immediately responsible for causing Palamon's and Arcite's suffering:

> O Cupid, out of alle charitee!
> O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
> Ful sooth is seyd that love ne lordshipe
> Wol noght, his thankes, have no felaweshipe.
> (I,1623-1626)

Events in the tale are given a sense of inevitability when the Knight says: "Where it by aventure or destynee-/ As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be-" (I,1465-1466). And destiny is behind Theseus' unlikely interruption of the battle between the two young Knights:

> The destinee, ministre general,
> That executeth in the world over al
> The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
> So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
> The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
> Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
> That falleth nat elt, withinne a thousand yeer.
> For certeinly, oure appetites heer,
> Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
> Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
> This mene I now by mygnty Theseus...
> (I,1663-1672)

That Theseus is in a position to exert some degree of control over Palamon and Arcite, is clear from the plot of the tale. It is he who determines to imprison the cousins; it is he who frees Arcite; it is he who halts their fight, and arranges for the tournement; and it is he who declares that the tournament shall be bloodless. But from the very beginning of the tale, it is apparent that Theseus' control will be benevolent and merciful. Even before Palamon and Arcite are introduced, both the power and mercy of Theseus are demonstrated. He shows pity to the weeping women of Thebes, and rectifies the situation about which they complain by taking revenge on the tyrannical spiteful Creon. In this first glimpse of his character, his power as a conqueror is tempered with pity and mercy, and this episode becomes a model for his actions throughout the tale. The conversion of anger to amusement when he finds the young knights fighting clearly follows this model. From the outset there is the sense

that Palamon and Arcite, being under Theseus' control, will be treated fairly and mercifully.

But Palamon and Arcite are also under the control of the pagan gods, who are not so obviously benevolent. The lovers' comments about the harshness of the gods are certainly justified from their point of view, and until Mercury's appearance in Arcite's dream, the reader has no reason to doubt their view. But Mercury's advice: "To Atthenes shaltou wende,/ Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende." seems intended to help Arcite, and to suggest that the divinities will provide a solution to the dilemma. Once Diana informs Emelye that she "shalt be wedde unto onn of tho/ That han for thee so muchel care and wo" there can be little doubt that a happy ending for at least one of them is eminent. But the comic dispute between Mars and Venus temporarily puts the matter in doubt again. However, Mars and Venus need not be taken seriously because Saturn is present to settle the matter and to satisfy both gods. Saturn's long elaboration of his cruelties convinces the reader his power is greater than that of either Mars or Venus, and that his decision will be made manifest. Despite Saturn's usually malevolent nature, his assurance that each will be granted what he has requested guarantees a satisfactory solution to the

to the disputes of Mars and Venus, and of Palamon and Arcite. And the point that Saturn has shaped a resolution is reinterated when Venus is reassured after Arcite's victory in the tournament.

The responsible control of Saturn and the belevolence of Theseus are the manifestations of Destiny, who is guiding all of the characters toward a resolution which is happy for least one of the lovers. Through this benevolent, comic control, the reader is thus assured that a satisfactory solution will be reached. Since the audience knows that those in control of the action will provide a happy conclusion, there are no grounds on which to fear for Palamon and Arcite. They become distanced from the audience, and their actions become ridiculous. But the Knight's serious treatment of the two, and his deliberate, gradual revelation of the merciful nature of the controlling figures prevents the tale from becoming pure comedy. Though Theseus is seen to be benevolent even before Palamon and Arcite are introduced, he has only the power of a human being. There is no way he could possibly satisfy both lovers. That the pagan divinities are going to resolve the matter is only suggested by Mercury's appearance, and even when it is clear that Saturn will satisfy all concerned, it is not clear how. Until the appearance of Mercury and the lovers' dilemma must be taken as impending

tragedy for both; between Mercury's advice and Part Three Palamon and Arcite become distanced yet remain sympathetic; and in Part Four the Knight attempts to describe a primarily comic ending in spite of Arcite's death.

But the comedy of the Part Four, and the purpose of the combination of tragic and comic elements, are clear only when Fortune and the First Mover are considered. The importance of Fortune is evident from the beginning of Palamon's and Arcite's woe, as Arcite accurately assess their situation in prison:

> For Goddes love, taak al in pacience
> Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be.
> Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee:
> Some wikke aspect or disposicioun
> Of Saturne, by som constellacioun,
> Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
> So stood the hevene whan that we were born.
> We moste endure it; this is the short and playn.
> (I,1084-1091)

He again shows that he understands the nature of Fortune when he complains that it is foolish for men to attempt to determine their own fate:

> Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune
> On purveiaunce of God, or of Fortune,
> That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
> Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?
> (I,1251-1254)

This, of course, becomes ironic when he prays to Mars, wins the battle, but does not live to marry Emelye. But the Knight does not comment on such inconsistancies in Palamon

and Arcite. That Arcite says they must be resigned to Fortune, (I,1084-1091) but contradicts himself by concentrating all of this efforts on winning the battle that is only the means to winning Emelye, and that each thinks that the other has the better lot after Arcite is freed, is not criticised by the Knight. He seems to understand, as does Chaucer in Troilus and Criseyde, that it is quite human to blame Fortune for what is unpleasant, and to actively pursue earthly pleasure, even though it is unstable, and even though it is bestowed only by Fortune.

But the moral of "The Knight's Tale" is not simply that one must be resigned to Fortune, but also that all Fortune can be in some way good fortune. This apparent paradox is resolved by Theseus' exposition of Boethian philosophy. Arcite's death must be accepted and no longer mourned for two reasons. The first is that living forever is impossible, and that one should accept the determination of God as to when Arcite is to die:

> "That same Prince and that Moevere," quod he,
> "Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun
> Certeyne dayes and duracioun
> To al that is engendred in this place,
> Over the whiche day they may nat pace,
> Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge.
> . . ." (I,2994-2999)
>
> What maketh this but Juppiter, the kyng
> That is prince and cause of alle thyng,
> Convertynge al unto his propre welle

> From which it is dirryved, sooth no telle?
> And heer-agayns no creature on lyve,
> Of no degree, availleth for to stryve.
> (I,3035-3040)

The second reason that his death is acceptable is that he died in the height of his honour:

> And certeinly a man hath moost honour
> To dyen in his excellence and flour,
> Whan he is siker of his goode name;
> Thanne hath he doon his freend, ne hym, no shame.
> And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,
> Whan with honour up yolden is his breeth,
> Than whan his name apalled is for age,
> For al forgeten is his vassellage.
> Thanne is it best, as for a worthy fame,
> To dyen whan that he is best of name.
> The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse.
> Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,
> That goode Arcite, of chivalrie the flour,
> Departed is with duetee and honour
> Out of this foule prision of this lyf? (I,3047-3061)

Once Arcite's death is considered in this way, the joy of the marriage of Palamon and Emelye can be felt with fewer misgivings. Rather than countering or undercutting the comic ending suggested by the marriage, Arcite's death is made to contribute to it. His death, too, is for the best.

"The Knight's Tale" does not expound a philosophy of Fortune by contrasting the death of Arcite with the marriage of Palamon. Instead it takes the potential double tragedy of both lovers (as it seems in Part One that neither will win Emelye), and gradually turns it into a single comedy. Fortune brings not only earthly woe, as the Monk would seem to have it, but also yields earthly joy. However,

earthly joy is quite fragile, and depends largely on how one looks at the world. Arcite's death is mourned for years until the philosophy of Theseus and the Knight transforms this view, and recognizes the good fortune in his death.

For the Knight, Fortune is clearly a basis for comedy, as in his view all Fortune can be good. But the tragic elements are necessary to his tale if the Knight is to make his point convincing. The tale cannot concern undignified, typically comic characters, and cannot be told in an "unstudied and lowly" style if it is to have a serious moral. Seriousness must be maintained in order to make a serious point.

The Book of the Duchess, like "The Knight's Tale," combines elements of tragedy and comedy in order to present an expansive view of life on earth. Chaucer's conception of life in The Book of the Duchess is certainly different from the Knight's, but the manipulation of genres to present a point of view marks a similarity between the two works. The moral of The Book of the Duchess, "to lytel while oure blysse lasteth!" is quite simply the philosophy of Fortune as it was popularly understood. In The Book of the Duchess Fortune is again seen to have two sides; it brings both joy and woe, and as in "The Knight's Tale," it is the narrator's view of his subject, rather than the subject itself,

which is finally important.

As mentioned in the beginning of the paper, the narrator misses the clear moral of the story of Seys and Alcyone, and is instead fascinated by the possibility of a real god of sleep:

> Whan I had red thys tale wel,
> And overloked hyt everydel,
> Me thoughte wonder yf hit were so;
> For I had never herd speke, or tho,
> Of noo goddes that koude make
> Men to slepe, ne for to wake;
> For I ne knew never god but oon. (231-237)

The story interests the narrator not because of its moral, which is purposefully overlooked, but because it is "a wonder thing": a tale concerning the marvelous and unheard of.

Similarly, the suffering of the Black Knight in his dream is not as important as drawing out the story of how the Knight fell in love, won his lady, and finally lost her. The dreamer immediately recognizes and seems to understand that the Black Knight is suffering:

> And with a dedly sorwful soun
> He made of rym ten vers or twelve
> Of a compleynte to hymselve,
> The mooste pitee, the moste rowthe,
> That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,
> Hit was gret wonder that Nature
> Myght suffre any creature
> To have such sorwe, and be not ded. (462-469)

And in the Knight's complaint the reason for his suffering is evident:

"I have of sorwe so gret won
That joye gete I never non,
Now the I see my lady bryght,
Which I have loved with al my myght,
If fro me ded and ys agoon.
Allas, deth, what ayleth the,
That thou noldest have taken me,
Whan thou toke my lady swete,
That was so fair, so fresh, so fre,
So good, that men may wel se
Of al goodnesse she had no mete!" (475-486)

Nevertheless, the narrator seems to ignore this brief explanation. He then fails to understand the metaphor of the chess game with Fortune, and the loss of the Black Knight's queen. He takes the Knight literally and cannot understand why the loss of his queen should cause such suffering. After trying to convince the Knight not to commit suicide he remarks: "But ther is no man alyve her/ Wolde for a fers make this woo!" (740-741). When the Knight is not convinced, the dreamer asks for a full explanation of his sorrows:

"Loo, [sey] how that may be?" quod y;
"Good sir, telle me al hooly
In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore
That ye have thus youre blysse lore." (745-748)

Regardless of whether the dreamer's naivete is genuine or pretended, his intention is certainly to force the Black Knight to tell his story in full. Again the narrator is fascinated by the telling of the story, and misses, or pretends to miss, the clarity of the initial explanation of suffering.

As the closing lines of the poem indicate the narrator's fascination with stories is finally manifested in the telling of his sleeplessness and subsequent dream:

> Thoughte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven
> That I wol, be processe of tyme,
> Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
> As I kan best, and that annon."
> This was my sweven; now hit ys doon. (1330-1334)

Though Chaucer is not identifiable with his narrator, his view toward suffering is expressed through the narrator. Chaucer expresses his sorrow over the death of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, by telling tales of losses of loved ones. In the telling the woes precipitated by death can be balanced against the bliss experienced in life. Art can be a consolation because it allows one to detach himself from the immediate sorrow, and balance it with past joys. And finally there is a kind of joy in making this balance, in putting a dream into ryme.

In order to make art a consolation the inclusion of elements from both tragedy and comedy is certainly necessary. A purely comic treatment of suffering, if that is possible, would deny the validity of that emotion, and would be highly inappropriate given the occasion for which the poem was written. A purely tragic treatment of suffering would deny any consolation at all. But Chaucer introduces comedy to apparent tragedy (or elegy) in order to establish that woe is only temporary. Suffering is not

allowed to stand alone, but must be seen as in conjunction with the joys of a love relationship: all love relationships necessarily involve both. Additionally, the sufferings of Alcyone and the Black Knight are juxtaposed against the narrator's light-hearted fascination with stories. In The Book of the Duchess the woes of Fortune can be somewhat relieved by framing them within art, and it is only through the combination of comedy and tragedy that Chaucer can make this clear.

But comedy and tragedy are also combined in other works and for other purposes. Although it seems impossible given Chaucer's conceptions of tragedy and comedy, one of the ways he combines the genres is to show something that is simultaneously both comic and tragic. Though Chaucer does not often do this, it is apparent in "The Franklin's Tale." That the tale is potentially tragic seems clear enough. As James Sledd says:

> By medieval definitions, the tale approaches tragedy in that an exalted personage (cf.1.735), through a trick of Fortune and her own slight moral error, is brought from prosperity almost to disaster.[18]

But many critics complain that the potential tragedy of the tale is destroyed by the weakness of Dorigen's complaint. However, Sledd convincingly argues that neither Chaucer nor the Flanklin intended the tale to be a tragedy;

he claims it is tragicomedy and that "the complaint . . . is the turning point at which incipient tragedy becomes eventual comedy."[19]

The audience reacts to Dorigen's dilemma in ways fitting to both comedy and tragedy; she is distanced yet sympathetic. She is an "exalted personage" fitting for tragedy, and the Franklin's discussion of gentleness (ll. 761-802) enhances that image of her. Her suffering caused by the absence of Arveragus is respected by the Franklin and made quite sympathetic; and she remains sympathetic when her playful offer and good intentions ironically result in the obligation to Auerelius. But because of the nature of her mistake, the reader surely sees its comic potential; if it were not for the sympathy felt for her, and the seriousness of her situation, one would laugh at her. However, her situation is not only tragi-comic because she becomes the victim of her own playfulness; her complaint, which would seem to hold the possibility of fully establishing her as a tragic figure, fails to provoke pity or pathos. Rather, it shows her irresoluteness. She begins strongly, stating her alternatives, and citing examples of women who chose death over dishonor. After three examples of maidens, she begins to consider wives, but after discussing only one wife she illogically returns to maidens. Sledd explains the break in the pattern in this way:

> The vehemence of her desire for courage betrays her fear, and Chaucer makes the first sign of her increasing distraction her reversion to the maidens,...[20]

But her reference to the "sevene maydens of Milesie" breaks her established pattern in a second way as well. She devotes only three lines to this example, whereas previous examples received approximately ten lines each. Instead of developing her examples in detail she becomes more concerned with the number of cases she cites, and consequently devotes less time and space to each. Her next remark: "Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,/ Koude I now telle as touchynge this mateere." (V, 1412-1413) indicates that she knows of examples enough, that she wants to follow them, and that she should therefore be resolved to die. But she continues to recite more instances; she has not yet found the courage she needs, and tries to find it in still more examples. Since she is aware that the examples can go on ad infinitum, and yet is undecided, it is clear that she will never be resolute. However, this is made even more emphatic when she again realizes that she should be decisive, but again lists more examples:

> What sholde I mo ensamples heerof sayn,
> Sith that so manye han hemselven slayn
> Wel rather than they wolde defouled be?
> I wol conclude that it is bet for me
> To sleen myself than been defouled thus.
> I wol be trewe unto Arveragus,
> Or rather sleen myself in som manere,
> As dide Demociones doghter deere
> By cause . . . (V,1419-1427)

Much of the seriousness of the tale is undercut here: where she could be most convincing and moving, she is almost comic. The potential comedy of the situation is more fully realized than the impending tragedy. Chaucer has established two frames in which Dorigen can possibly be viewed, the tragic and the comic, and in her complaint the reader sees her through both simultaneously.

After the complaint the tale begins to look more and more like comedy. The lines immediately following the complaint are lighter in tone, and the Franklin implies that Dorigen's lack of resolve leaves the decision to the more capable Arveragus:

> Thus pleyned Dorigen a day or tweye,
> Purposynge evere that she wolde deye.
> But nathelees, upon the thridde nyght,
> Hoom cam Arveragus, this worthy knyght, (V,1457-1460)

And within another fifty lines the Franklin establishes the possibility of a turn in Fortune, and asks the audience to judge the propriety of wuch a turn:

> Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crie.
> She may have bettre fortune than yow semeth:
> And whan that ye han herd the tale, demeth.
> (V,1496-1498)

But there is a purpose for this combination of comedy with tragedy. "The Franklin's Tale" is designed as an exposition of "gentilesse," and, as Sledd suggests, the comic elements of the tale are necessary if it is not to be a melodrama which subverts its own purpose:

> Make Dorigen's dilemma seem really insoluble, make her danger too truly threatening, and automatically the generosity of Aurelius provides an explosive emotional release. What audience would have any feeling left for the generosity of the Orleans clerk or any interest in the Franklin's question, now made pert and shallow by the rousing of so much emotion?[21]

According to Sledd the intentions of the tale necessitate something between tragedy and comedy:

> If his (the Franklin's) "moralitee" is not to be absurd, his tale must be believable; and yet the tale must be removed from the shifts and chances of this world, for, through the plot is dangerously close to tragedy, the heroes and heroine come safe to a good end. A tale of ideal trouthe and gentilesse cannot be funny and photographic; yet, if told too earnestly, it will invite parody. A difficult balance must be maintained throughout: neither pure tragedy will do, nor pure comedy, pure pathos nor pure humor.[22]

Without the tragic elements in the tale, especially the worthiness of Arveragus, "gentilesse" could not be taken seriously, and without the comic elements the tale would end unhappily, and "gentillesse"would seem to be of no earthly value.

Like "The Knight's Tale" and The book of the Duchess, "The Franklin's Tale" presents a way of dealing with Fortune; it implies that through "gentilesse" some human misfortune can be averted. For the Franklin, "gentilesse" is not simply a matter of honourable, and behaving with dignity and elegance, but it is also a capacity for forgiveness. This is made clear from the beginning where the Franklin dwells at length on the "gentilesse" of Arveragus and Dorigen:

> Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,
> Ye shul it lerne, wher so ye wole or noon,
> For in this world, certein, ther no wight is
> That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.
> . . .
> And therfore hath this wise, worthy knyght,
> To lyve in ese, suffrance hire bihight,
> And she to hym ful wisly gan to swere
> That nevere sholde ther be defaute in here.
> (V,777-790)

Only the forgiveness of Aurelius and the Clerk avert disaster. But as the tale demonstrates, "gentilesse" in one character evokes the same response in others. Arveragus' insistance that Dorigen honour her promise moves Aurelius to release her from the obligation, and in turn, Aurelius' gentility prompts the Clerk to forgo his debt. Following this principle further, the Franklin's tale of "gentilesse" is designed to elicit "gentilesse" from his audience.

"The Clerk's Tale" also fits this pattern of illustrating a principle which makes the instability of Fortune more palatable. When examined closely it also contains elements of both tragedy and comedy. The tale could be classified as a comedy, as Grisilde is elevated from the lowest estate to the highest, and passes Walter's tests of her humility. The audience can fear for Grisilde only until it learns that her children are being well cared for: implicit in Walter's safeguarding of the children is the promise that Grisilde will be re-united with them if she passes his tests. And even as the tests become more difficult, the Clerk continues to assure his audience that

Grisilde will pass them. But as Walter's arbitrariness becomes more and more unfair (which is emphasized by the Clerk), and as her suffering becomes more and more intense, the comedy of the tale is strained to its very limits. Her pathetic, almost tragic, suffering must be extreme, however, if the Clerk is to be emphatic about his lesson.

"The Clerk's Tale" accepts human suffering as part of the goodness of God's plan. Suffering is used by God to test men, and they should therefore accept it, and demonstrate patience:

> For, sith a womman was so pacient
> Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oughte
> Receyven al in gree that God us sent;
> For greet skile is, he preeve that he wroghte.
> But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,
> As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede;
> He preeveth folk al day, it is no drede,
>
> And suffreth us, as for oure exerise,
> With sharpe scourges of adversitee
> Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
> Nat for to knowe pure wyl, for certes he,
> Er we were born, knew al oure freletee:
> And for oure beste is al has governaunce.
> Let us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.
> (IV,1149-1162)

The Clerk's treatment of patience seems to suggest the Knight's principle of making virtue of necessity; by patiently accepting necessity Grisilde becomes an archetype of virtue. But the Clerk goes further than the Knight, (who considers only the worldly), and places potential tragedy within a larger comedy, the infinite goodness of God's plan.

The combination of comedy and tragedy in all four of

the works discussed is accomplished by establishing multiple points of view toward the subject matter. In "The Knight's Tale" Palamon and Arcite can be viewed seriously from their own point of view, or comically when the First Mover is considered. In The Book of the Duchess suffering must be taken seriously, but is qualified by the narrator's proposal to frame it within art. The Franklin establishes a tragic view of Dorigen, but it gradually gives way to a comic one. And Grisilde's suffering is needless from an earthly point of view, but works in God's plan to establish a legend of patience. Similarly, the comedy and tragedy of The Canterbury Tales is put into a frame of religious abnegation of the worldly by Chaucer's "Retractions."

It seems typical of Chaucer to juxtapose opposite things, joy and sadness, lightness and heavyness, seriousness and frivolity, comedy and tragedy, and to consider them simultaneously, or even view both from a third perspective. In The Canterbury Tales all types of characters and tales are juxtaposed, and then framed by the piousness of "The Parson's Tale" and Chaucer's "Retractions." Not only do the pilgrims comment and reflect on each other, but Chaucer wishes to comment on all of them. The various elements of comedy and tragedy, and comic and tragic tales, illustrate the incredible, neither exclusively tragic nor exclusively comic, diversity of the world created by God. Prompted by "The Parson's

Tale," Chaucer finally adds the perspective of possible salvation, and all of the characters, tales and poems, have to be reconsidered. In many of Chaucer's works it becomes clear that life on Earth is a problem which is examined through the perspectives of both worldly comedy and worldly tragedy, but with the "Retractions" Chaucer suggests that life must also be examined from the perspectives of the ultimate comedy and tragedy of salvation and damnation. Worldly comedy and tragedy are used to show the complete nature of Fortune so that various characters can propose ways of reacting to it. But all their points of view are framed by the perspective of the "Retractions."

However, Chaucer is primarily a worldly poet, he never attempts to show that anything is ultimately tragic or ultimately comic. The Knight's comment in Arcite's death: "Of soules fynde I nat in this registre," (I,2812) could very well be said by Chaucer about each of his characters. Even with his "Retractions" he only suggests that there is yet another view; he does not explicitly say that any of his characters are saved or damned (although he comes much closer to claiming that some are saved than he does to maintaining others are damned). He suggests that to be tragic on earth, or almost tragic, as are Arcite, Dorigen and Grisilde, can ultimately be comic, and he implies that

to be comic on earth, as are the Miller, the Wife of Bath, the Friar, the Summoner, and the Pardoner, could ultimately be tragic, but the ultimate judgements on life on earth are not made by him. The last frame must remain suggestive and undefined for any individual.

Footnotes

1 All line references will be from F.N. Robinson, ed., The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957)

2 Willard Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy (1936, rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970) p. 133-134.

3 Ibid p. 134.

4 Ibid pp. 134-135 This seems to be a rephrasing of the moral which he maintains is part of Boccaccio's "working hypothesis": "Trust not in all this world, but in the next world; . . . embark upon no ambitious worldly action, covet nothing that the world can give you, busy yourself with nothing in this world except spiritual preparation for Heaven." p. 79.

5 R.E. Kaske, "The Knight's Interruption of 'The Monk's Tale,'" ELH, 24 (1957) . pp. 249-268.

6 Walter Clyde Curry. "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde," Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences (2nd ed.; New York: Barnes and Noble; Inc., 1960) rpt. in Richard J. Schoeck, and Jerome Taylor, eds. Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II (Notre Dame: University Notre Dame Press, 1961) p. 65.

7 Howard R. Patch "Troilus on Determinism," Speculum, VI (1929) rpt. in Richard J. Schoeck, and Jerome Taylor, eds. Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univerity Press, 1961) p. 82.

8 D.W. Robertson, Jr. "Chaucerian Tragedy," ELH. xix (1952) rpt. in Richard J. Schoeck, and Jerome Taylor, eds. Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1961) p. 97.

9 The tendency toward the private and "unheroic" is considered as an aspect of writing of the period by J. A. Burrow, Ricardian Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971) pp. 93-129.

10 Dante's letter to Can Grande della Scala in Paget Toynbee, Dant s Alagh Epistolae, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) p. 200.

11 Ibid, p. 200.

12 Ibid, p. 201.

13 Kaske, p. 261. Kaske is right to see that the view of Fortune is the real grounds for the Knight's interruption.

14 Raymond Preston, Chaucer, 1952; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969 pp. 183, 186-187.

15 Richard Neuse, "The Knight: The First Mover in Chaucer's Human Comedy," University of Toronto Quarterly, xxxi (1962).

16 H.S. Wilson, "'The Knight's Tale' and Teseida Again," University of Toronto Quarterly, xviii (1949) 144.

17 Charles Muscatine "Form, Texture, and Meaning in Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale,'" PMLA, lxv (1950) 911-29.

18 James Sledd, "Dorgen's Complaint," Modern Philology, xlv (1947) p. 44, n. 43.

19 Ibid, p. 44.

20 Ibid, p. 43.

21 Ibid, p. 42.

22 Ibid, p. 41.

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THE PARADOXES OF THE JEW OF MALTA

Gary Werden

A DEPARTMENTAL PAPER

in

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of

English

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SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

Graduate Students

This is to certify that the departmental paper

By Mr. Gary Werden

Entitled The Paradoxes of the Jew of Malta

Complies with the regulations of this University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality

For the degree of:

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

Signed by the ~~final~~ examining committee:

David McKee, Chairman

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Like most of Marlowe's plays, the Jew of Malta is filled with ambiguities, but it is unique in the variety of divergent descriptions and interpretations of it. Understandings of it vary from Eliot's "savage farce",[1] to Cole's morality play-like interpretation.[2] It can be viewed as a deadly serious tragedy or as outrageously funny, or both at once. This is probably because the play is so negative, not really ennobling Barabas as a tragic hero, and not developing any single, clear positive theme or statement. It seems to be a play of contradictory concerns paradoxically juxtaposed: as the play seems to ask its audience to sympathize with Barabas as victim, it also asks that he be viewed as victimizer; as it appears to condemn Barabas morally, it makes his murders, particularly of the friars, almost a matter of levity; as it considers Barabas as an isolated individual it concerns the entire community of Malta as well. The play does not really consider a great multiplicity of points of view building to some more holistic view, but deals with a few contradictory concerns finding no satisfactory reconciliation between them. Its structure forms a strange paradox, destroying, as with the normal paradox, the premises which define it, but unusually refusing to suggest an enlightened way to view or define the idea of concern. Following the structure of the paradox, Marlowe

suggests that the given established premises are contradictory, irreconcilable, and inadequate, but instead of destroying ordinary premises in order to reveal some new expanded vision, he simply leaves a vacuum in the wake of such obliteration, asking himself and his audience how to fill it. However, all of this can become clear only when some of the play's thematic concerns, and its effect upon the audience are identified.

For the purpose of simplicity and clarity the paper will be divided into four sections. The first tries to establish the basic thematic pattern of the play, and the second relates the audience's experience in viewing it to this pattern. The characters' methods for persuing their ends are the subject of the third section, with the motivations of Barabas the topic of the forth. Both methods and Barabas' motivations relate to and elaborate the play's paradoxical thematic and experiential patterns.

The play illustrates a world of policy, greed, and selfishness, in which all of the characters, with the usual exceptions of Abigail and the nuns, are motivated solely by individual desires. Three very similar metaphors characterize the inordinate selfishness in the play:

Barabas. ....
Nay. let 'em combat, conquer, and kill all,
So they spare me, my daughter, and my wealth. (aside)
I,i,150-151

Lodowick. ....
But rather let the brightsome heavens be dim
And nature's beauty choke with stifling clouds,
Than my fair Abigail should frown on me.
II,iii,327-329

Barabas. ....
For, so I live, perish may all the world! V,v,10

Yet, most of the characters in the play live and function in the community of Malta, and also form smaller groups within this community. A tension between their fierce selfishness and their obligations to the group, runs through, and is basic to the play, with the major instance of this tension being between Barabas and the community of Malta. Two sides of the question are voiced by Ferneze and Barabas, Ferneze arguing for community responsibility and Barabas for individuals' rights. Ferneze gives a Medieval[3] or even Utilitarian argument to excuse his obviously unjust seizure of Barabas' property:

Ferneze. ....
No, Jew. We take particularly thine
To save the ruin of a multitude,
And better one want for a common good
Than many perish for a private man. I,ii,97-100

And several lines later Barabas asserts the superman's philosophy of individualism, questioning the value of life itself for persons who cannot fullfill themselves:

Barabas. ....
Why, I esteem the injury far less
To take the lives of miserable men
Than be the causers of their misery. I,ii,147-149

This establishes the conflict between the individual's desires and his communal obligations, a conflict which can be seen in almost every scene of the play, and which provides its basic tensions.

The forming of groups and living within the community of Malta are not unavoidably the "given," but are viewed as necessary for self fulfillment. The individuals in the play form groups in which they think their desires will be satisfied, for only by allying with others can personal goals be accomplished, either because more than one person is needed to complete a certain task (e.g. the retrieval of Barabas' gold from the newly formed nunnery) or others are needed so that they can be exploited (e.g. Bellamira's and Pilia-Borza's befriending of Ithamore). The alliance based on self-interest is simplified and exemplified by the "underplot"[4] characters, Ithamore, Bellamira, and Pilia-Borza, all of whose desires are simple and straightforward; the latter two need and use Ithamore as a tool for extorting the Jew's gold, and Ithamore is sexually aroused by the sight of Bellamire in spite of (or because of) his recognition that she is a coutresan. Ithamore is also enticed by Pilia-Borza's calling him a "gentlemen" and vows to steal some of the Jew's

gold to make himself "handsome" and live up to that title. The pattern of betrayal of a supposedly trusting "friend," or more accurately accomplice, for self-interest is evidenced in two obvious ways by these three characters: Ithamore betrays Barabas to satisfy his lust, and the other two betray him, first by successfully obtaining from Barabas the requested three hundred crowns and reporting to Ithamore that only ten were received, and second by implicating Ithamore, as well, when revealing Barabas' crimes.

Although Ferneze has the responsibility of governing the community of Malta and therefore seeing that things are done in its best interests, he too uses the community, by controlling it politically and militarily, for vested interests. In all of his contact with Barabas we sense that personal hatred is a more important motivation than governmental necessities. The seizure of half of Barabas' wealth would be unfair and excessive, and the seizure of all of it is outrageous. The final betrayal of Barabas is unnecessary politically since Barabas has agreed to restore the governorship to him and is a result of his anti-Semitism and a revenging of his son's death.

Barabas, however, provides the focus of the play, and it is primarily through his actions and relationships that the relation of the individual and the group is studied. Like the other characters, he too, ultimately cares only about himself ("Ego mihimet sum semper proximus."), but also like

them, he needs others in order to fulfill himself. Both his selfishness and his connections with, and responsibilities to, others are evident in the first scene. In a beautifully ambiguous simile he compares his relation with his daughter, Abigail, to the relation of Agamemnon to his daughter, Iphigen, and in an aside during his conversation with the other Jews he indicates that his daughter, his wealth, and himself are his only real concerns. The relationship with Abigail certainly seems strong and real here, yet any communal compassion he has extends no further. Although he has responsibilities to, he feels no real alliance with the other Jews, whom he calls "base slaves," and the larger concerns of the entire community of Malta hold absolutely no interest for him. The previously quoted comment, "Nay, let 'em combat, conquer, and kill all,/ So they spare me, my daughter, and my wealth," summarizes his feelings about these groups. Yet the bond between Abigail and him does not last; when it becomes convenient for him to do so he uses, or abuses, Abigail and confides in Ithamore instead. But this relationship fails too, again because of self-interests, and Ferneze is irohically Barabas' accomplice in his final act of treachery. Even here Barabas is estranged from both Ferneze on an individual basis and and from Malta as a group, which supposedly will not allow him to rule. Nevertheless, he continues here to use others

to satisfy his own interests; his liberation of Malta is almost incidental to his attempt to secure a safe and wealthy position for himself. Throughout the play Barabas' actions are selfish; at first they are communally selfish as he cares for Abigail as well as for himself, but his self interest narrows in seeking revenge on Don Mathias, Lodowick, the nuns, the two friars, Ithamore, Bellamira, Pilia-Borza, and in his deception of Calymath.

Throughout the play there is tension created because self-interests can be pursued only through communal relationships, and the movement and action are results of this tension. The action of the play consists primarily of the selfish acts of characters looking out only for themselves, and the destruction and formation of alliances founded only for personal ends. To begin again with the simplicity of the "underplot," Bellamira and Pilia-Borza, though they are apparently close, have a relationship based only on the pursuit of money; they are partners in prostitution and fraud. Even though Ithamore is very attracted to Bellamira, his interest in only sexual and self-seeking, but for this he gladly betrays and blackmails the Jew; Bellamira makes a more attractive offer than the Jew so Ithamore jumps at it. Similarly, Barabas willingly destroys his relation with Abigail (which is one of the few human relations which is not built only on self-interests), when the plot of

Lodowick's life demands Don Mathias' death as well. The relation with Ithamore is then established, but Barabas makes it clear to the audience that Ithamore will be discarded when he is no longer useful. Abigail reacts to the failure of the relation with her father by seeking a more morally acceptable relationship, and thus joins the nuns a second time. On the larger scale, Ferneze ignores Malta's alliance with the Turks (however tenuous it may be) when it seems Martin del Bosco can offer protection and will attack if no agreement is reached.

Because the motivation for the formation of human groups is always the satisfying of individual desires, not only are more advantageous groupings sought, but the old groups, and members of them, are very vulnerable to betrayal. When one group or alliance no longer fullfills an individual, it or he is discarded for another, and usually this process of reforming friendships, or more accurately alliances, demands betrayal of former associates. The groups in the play are relatively secure from destruction from the outside, but continually fail because of betrayals from within. When Barabas' desire for revenge is unsatisfied by the recovery of some of his gold and he turns to the plotting of the death of the governor's son, Abigail's real love for Don Mathias is overlooked; the ingenuity of the scheme, whereby each jealous, hateful lover kills the other, the sweetness of vengence, and the consequent receiving of admiration

from Ithamore, overshadow considerations, if he really stops to think of them, (which is doubtful) for Abigail. Similarly, Abigail's longings for non-hypocritical "love on earth," "pity," and"piety," drive her into the nunnery permanently, and though we must view them as reasonable and admirable, they do lead to a kind of retributive betrayal of her father. And as already mentioned, Ithamore betrays Barabas when he sees an opportunity to satisfy his lust. But on a larger scale, Malta, in spite of all its difficulties, falls to the Turks only when Barabas turns traitor, and similarly, the Turks fall only when betrayed. All of these betrayals are necessary, however, if the individual is to have his way: the symmetry of Barabas' scheme demands the death of Abigail's true lover as well as Lodowick's; Abigail's desire for a community of love and piety necessitates her withdrawl to the convent; Ithamore's lust is satisfied more easily when he can extort gold from the Jew; and Barabas' betrayal of Malta to the Turks, and subsequent position of power, saves him from the Turks whom he is among, and from Ferneze's administration of justice.

These failures of group relations are not merely the failures of individuals however; it is true that individuals feel no compassion for,or even responsibilities to, others, but most of the groups do not seem to offer anything meaningful to the individual either. Malta betrays Barabas

by taking all his wealth; his relation with Abigail obviously does not offer enough for him, and it is certainly disastrous to her. Barabas' alliance with Ithamore is grotesque and doomed from the beginning, and offers Ithamore as little as it offers Barabas. Ithamore views his affair with Bellamira as successful because he does not see that he is being deceived and used. The "underplot" relationship of Ithamore, Bellamira, and Pilia-Borza eventually leads to the downfall of all three, as Barabas' association with Ferneze leads to his. Similarly, the friars association with Barabas dooms them. Malta's attempt to form alliances with other communities are ultimately non-or counter-productive. Abigail's joining the nunnery is the only example of a satisfactory community, at least from the moral point of view, but it is obviously unsatisfactory to some degree in that it is unable to cope with the simple worldly problem of survival. Although ironically the community of Malta survives, it does so only through devious means, with many of its citizens dead, including its most capable and wealthy one, Barabas. It has clearly failed to effect any meaningful change which would establish the supposedly fair moral basis of the community, as a basis in fact. It has also failed to deal with the problems presented by individual differences in either abilities

or religious beliefs or both.

The general pattern of individuals working in groups but concerned only for themselves is thus clear. This paradox in the action of the play is related to the double sided perspective with which the audience views it. On one hand we despise all of the characters except Abigail, the nuns, and Barabas up to the recovery of his gold, and on the other we find Barabas attractive and ignore or subordinate the moral depravity of his revenge. The first of these views is moral and predominates up to Abigail's death; the second view is amoral, and dominates the last half of the play, even though the moral view is occasionally evident.[5] The moral perspective is related to the obligations of communality, and the amoral view relates to self-interest; when we condemn Barabas morally we recognize that he has certain communal responsibilities and must respect the actions and rights of others; but when we admire Barabas, often for his pure villiany, we applaud the selfish will which exerts itself for its own sake, and is above, beyond (as Nietzche puts it), or more precisely outside of moral codes. Tracing both of these tensions (self versus community and the moral and amoral views) through the play will reveal their interrelationship and the final inconclusiveness and negativity of the ending.

The set is the starting point of a lavish and spectacular first scene, but only when combined with Barabas' opulent imagery and exotic references (i.e. spices and silks, Spanish oils, the Samnites, and the men of Uz) does it impress us as a stage spectacle. We are indeed impressed with the height of his aspirations and the greatness of his verbal powers and business accomplishments. Though his possession of great wealth is impressive in itself, his rejection of that wealth with "Fie what a trouble 'tis to count this trash!" is even more so;[6] and his rejection of the assiduity of business in favor of easily made wealth, unrealistic as it is, must hold some attraction for us. He contrasts the weary miser (which his make-up and costume to some degree suggest that he is) with the successful, but carefree gold prospector and beachcomber, and like us would prefer to be the latter:

> The needy groom that never fingered groat
> Would make a miracle of thus much coin,
> But he whose steel-barred coffers are crammed full,
> And all his life-time hath been tired
> Wearying his fingers' ends with telling it,
> Would in his age be loath to labor so,
> And for a pound to sweat himself to death.
> Give me the merchants of the Indian mines
> That trade in metal of the purest mold,
> The wealthy Moor that in the eastern rocks
> Without control can pick his riches up
> And in his house heap pearl like pebble-stones,
> Receive them free and sell them by the weight.
> I,i,12-24

This side of Barabas is a distinct contrast to the characterization of him given and implied by the Machiavel in the prologue;

There he is greedy, deceitful, sacreligious, and potentially violent, but in the first soliloquy he is none of these (with the possible exception of greedy, but in spite of his wealth, this trait is not manifested in the first scene). The disgust we feel for him in the prologue is based on conventional moral grounds, but in admiring him in the first soliliquy, this moral view, because he seems neither moral nor immoral, is superseded, and he is attractive and admirable simply because he is a man of great abilities and accomplishments.

But as the scene goes on he begins to display the characteristics described by the Machiavel, and our moral view again becomes important. He is very careful and cautious in dealing with his merchants and shows the business competence which earned his wealth. Though his attractiveness dwindles here and in his second soliliquy, where he argues for his religion as opposed to Christianity, we still hold a high regard for him and reserve moral judgement until the actions which his philosophy manifests become clear. They immediately begin to do so when we see his deception, or at least lack of openness, with his brethren, who, because of their dullness, to some extent deserve something less than a totally open reception. But these indications of the moral depravity of Barabas become almost insignificant when he is stripped of his wealth. Marlowe leaves no doubt that Ferneze is a villian in seizing the property; the anti-Semetic scheme

for raising the tribute is obviously unfair, and would probably seem so even to an anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, Elizabethan audience. Had Barabas been the least bit responsible for the obligation of paying the tribute, the demand for half his wealth would seem more reasonable, but since Ferneze seems to have been the sole cause for such obligation, the responsibility for payment is primarily his. Rather than an act of simple religious intolerance, which would seem appropriate to Elizabethan audiences, Ferneze's actions seem motivated by a more personal hatred. Because of this intense personal hatred, and the unfair seizure of all of Barabas' wealth which springs from it, we are forced to side with wronged Barabas, in spite of the ambiguity in our moral view toward him. In this instance he is abused, and the recovery of his wealth, rather than the seizing of it, wins our moral sympathy. But in recovering the gold Barabas wins other sympathy as well; he is clear sighted and articulate enough to point out the religious hypocrisy of Ferneze and his cohorts; he dwells on how he was wronged and we must sympathize with and pity him, even though these speeches are often merely rhetorical poses; and he shows that he is clever enough to protect himself by hiding some of his wealth. His arguments here expose the shame of the religious and communal positions taken by Ferneze, and his superior verbal powers and planning lead

us to admire the abilities of the individual. We recognize the rights and potential prowress of the individual not only morally, but amorally as well. We feel a sense of retribution, if not a sense of triumph with the recovery of the gold for it is a realization of both our moral and non-moral values.

There is a complete turnabout in our response to Barabas and in the relation of self to community when Barabas extends his revenge by plotting to have Lodowick and Don Mathias kill each other. This is quite subtly developed by expanding the suggestions of Barabas' immorality in conjunction with the continued demonstration of Barabas' superiority over the other characters. These two contrasting impressions play against one another and the sympathy felt for Barabas in the recovery of his wealth turns to real ambivalence. Once the first movement of the play (the loss and recovery of the gold) is completed and punctuated by a scene developing the "overplot,"[8] Barabas' bitterness and obsessional hatred begin to display themselves. In his first speech of this portion of the play his hatred and anger seem to grow continually and though it is partially justified, as with the three Jews in the first scene, it becomes clearer that he is going too far. We lose some of our moral sympathy for him and begin to wonder how such a man won our sympathy before. Forgive me for quoting at length, but the tone of his speech here is characteristic of one facet of his behavior

through the rest of the play:

> In spite of these swine-eating Christians,
> Unchosen nation, never circumcised,
> Such as-poor villians-were n'er thought upon
> Till Titus and Vespasian conquered us,
> Am I become as wealthy as I was,
> They hoped my daughter would ha' been a nun,
> But she's at home, and I have hought a house
> As great and fair as is the governor's;
> And there, in spite of Malta, will I dwell,
> Having Ferneze's hand, whose heart I'll have-
> Ay, and his son's too - or it shall go hard.
> I am not of the tribe of Levi, I,
> That can so soon forget an injury.
> We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please,
> And when we grin, we bite; yet are our looks
> As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.
> I learned in Florence how to kiss my hand,
> Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
> And duck as low as any barefoot friar,
> Hoping to see them starve upon a stall,
> Or else be gathered for in our synagogue,
> That when the offering-basin comes to me,
> Even for charity I may spit into't. II,iii,7-29

Even here, though, we are not totally morally outraged by Barabas, because Lodowick's first lines make it clear that he,too, is selfish and perhaps devious:

> I hear the wealthy Jew walked this way.
> I'll seek him out and so insinuate
> That I may have a sight of Abigail,
> For Don Mathias tells me she is fair. II,iii,32-35

As was the case with the contrast of Barabas' treatment of the Jews and Ferneze's treatment of him, Barabas is again not as bad as we expect when compared to the others in his world. Lodowick seems no more moral than his father or Barabas and thus we feel much less strongly about the plot on his life than we would about a plot on a wholly sympathetic character's. This lack of sympathy for Lodowick

lessens the importance of our moral evaluation of Barabas and thereby increases our non-moral one, and amorally Barabas is the most respectable figure in the play (outside Abigail who is as respectable because she also has a strong and clear view of what life should be, and manifests up to it). We can actually enjoy and laugh at his brutal asides and his exposure of the shallowness, inconsistency and hypocrisy of Lodowick.

The moral depravity of Barabas is fully developed in his "As for myself, I walk abroad a'nights / And kill sick people groaning under walls" speech. As many critics point out he is evil incarnate here and the equivalent of the Medieval Vice figure, yet he is also interesting and heroic, as a demonic hero, and because the world in which he lives seems to be run by power and cunning instead of morality. But when the depth of Abigail's love for Don Mathias and the fact that he, too, is going to die become apparent, our response to Barabas is total moral repulsion: we can overlook his immorality somewhat when his victims are also immoral and would willingly make (and have indirectly made, in permitting Ferneze's injustice) him the victim if they could, but we cannot even consider his superior ingenious cunning in such a clear cut moral case. The episode does not stop with Don Mathias' death and with Abigail an unwilling and unwitting accomplice who has all her hopes

and principles betrayed. Barabas goes further, and Abigail and the innocent nuns whom she chooses to retreat with are also murdered. In the murders, and especially in the speech where he is gleefully stiring the poisioned rice, Barabas is again the Vice in a morality structure. He had appealed to us on non-moral grounds in many ways up to this point; his superiority is obvious and displayed by his wealth, his rhetoric, his unraveling of the convoluted logic or rationalization behind Ferneze's actions, his resistance to Ferneze's oppression, his forsight in hiding some of his wealth, and his cunning in an evil world; but the murders of Don Mathias, the nuns, and particularly Abigail show us the limitation of this amoral admiration; it must be tempered with our moral perspective. Similarly, in the first movement the self is exultant; we admire Barabas for his abilities and his power to exert his will; the community represented both figuratively and literally by Ferneze is the villan and the individual the hero. But here that too is reversed and communal obligations, at least minimal ones of preserving the rights and lives of others, are now felt to be necessary. As our non-moral view is inadequate and must be combined with morality, the exaltation of the self must yield to respect for communality.

Just as the major pattern of the first half of the

play shows the self and the amoral perspective to be inadequate in themselves, the second half of the play works for opposite ends; though it ends in conventional morality play fashion with the death of the Vice, and the community of Malta surviving and becoming more secure, both morality and communality are empty and need to be combined with an amoral view and the free expression of the self. As the first half of the play leads us into siding with Barabas with few reservations, appealing primarily amorally, but also to our moral sensibilities, (in that he is the victim of injustice and attempts to right that injustice), the second half of the play convinces us to accept him, at least temporarily, on amoral grounds, since his victims in this half are as morally disgusting as he is. And again our attraction is undercut, as we realize when we feel no sympathy for him when he dies; but here our moral disgust is also inadequate because he dies at the hands of Ferneze and by his own devious means, rather than through some kind of devine vengence.

Barabas' decision to seek vengence on the two friars is, of course, cruel and morally despicable, though necessary for self preservation. This occurs when his moral depravity is most strongly felt, immediately after Abigail's death and his most outrageous remark:

> How sweet the bells ring now the nuns are dead,
> That sound at other times like tinkers pans.
> IV,i,2-3

But the friars quickly show themselves to be unscrupulous and unworthy of our sympathy; first Friar Barnardine implicitly threatens to break the law of secrecy in confession and reveal Barabas' crimes to Ferneze, and then Friar Jacomo appears ludicrous as he repeats each of Friar Barnardine's lines, not knowing how to finish them even if it were ethical or necessary for him to do so. Both friars are motivated by "The wind that bloweth all the world besides, / Desire of gold" in their attempts to convert Barabas and are again ridiculous in fighting over it. As was the case with Lodowick and Don Mathias, Barabas plays on the lack of Christian brotherhood, exposing the hypocrisy of his unsympathetic victims. In spite of this we are reminded of the moral depravity of the murder by Marlowe's showing the actual murder on stage. But even here our moral response is not allowed to dominate, as Friar Barnardine is propped up only to be knocked down by his rival as the scene turns to slapstick comedy. Friar Jacomo's plea for secrecy from Barabas and Ithamore continues the comedy with Barabas now having a secret to use against him, and his unprincipled and common instinct for self preservation is at least as bad, viewed morally, as Barabas' decision to report him.

There is not even this bit of ambivalence in Barabas' killing of Ithamore and his associates. Bellamira and Pilia-Borza are never sympathetic, on any grounds; they are blatently immoral, and very petty and ordinary in their

blackmail scheme, both in aspirations and method. Similarly, Ithamore holds interest as a character only when he expresses his interest in Bellamira, but even here he is so simple and base that he is unsympathetic. Particularly since these three plan to, and do eventually, expose Barabas, the Jew's action is merely the expected retribution.

The moral framework becomes significant again, however, after Barabas successfully feigns death. It is understandable that he might seek revenge on Ferneze, although he is certainly obsessional about it, but when his vengence turns to the entire town he is again unconditionally morally damnable. He is again willing to be responsible for killing innocent people:

> I'll be revenged on this accursed town,
> For by my means Calymath shall enter in.
> I'll help to slay their children and their wives,
> To fire the churches, pull their houses down.
> V,i,60-63

But we do not strongly condemn Barabas when the actual political betrayal is performed; none of the townspeople seem to be hurt and the only real change is that Ferneze is no longer governor, which seems a blessing. In the exchange between Barabas and Ferneze after the capture of Malta, and with the initial roles of the two men reversed from act I, scene ii, Barabas is certainly the calmer more reasonable man, both in terms of this encounter alone, and when compared to Ferneze's attitude toward him in act I, scene ii. But

Barabas again displays his pure selfishness in realizing the danger of being governor, and in planning to "fill his bags" in the process of abdicating the governorship. Though his deception of Calymath restores Malta to its own people and Ferneze to the governorship, these ends could presumably be accomplished after Calymath's departure and without his death. Barabas is certainly vicious in his anticipation of the deed, and therefore morally contemptible:

> And if you like them, drink your fill and die!
> For, so I live, perish may all the world!
> Now, Selim Calymath, return me word
> That thou wilt come, and I am satisfied. V,v,9-12

The end of the play is acted out in moral terms and it ends much like the Medieval morality play with the Vice being killed. Even the falling of Barabas and the cauldron into which he drops follow the Hell symbolizm of a morality play. But even though Barabas is morally despicable and gets just what he deserves, the thematic resolution is not this simple because the instrument of his death, Ferneze, and the manner with which he carries it out, are very unsatisfactory. Barabas' death is "a Jew's courtesy," as Ferneze terms it, and is a product of both rampant self-interest and the method by which selfishness is pursued, policy, but it has nothing to do with moral principles. The agent of Barabas' death is ironically no more moral than the victim. The last words of the play seem on the surface like a strong, conclusive, moral ending:

> So, march away, and let due praise be given
> Neither to fate nor fortune, but to heaven.
> V,v 123-124

but ring hollow because we see so clearly that the instrument and method of Barabas' death are not heaven's.

Similarly, the survival of Malta proves nothing but the power of policy. It has not solved any of the problems of communality which have been seen throughout the play; the community offers nothing more to its members than it did in the beginning; Ferneze is still the incompetent, prejudiced governor. Although unchecked selfishness is only destructive, community under its conditions in the play is no more hopeful. The play ends not by finding some middle ground between total selfishness and the absolute lack of recognition of individual rights and aspirations, but by showing us and having us feel, through the clash of our moral and non-moral perspectives, the inadequacy of both positions.

Just as there is an unresolved polarity, or paradoxical relationship between selfishness and communality, and between our amoral and moral perspectives, there is a polarity between the methods by which desires are pursued and fullfilled, policy, and Christianity. This duality is related to the original one of self and community, as policy is the means by which selfish desires are pursued and Christianity is the means by which selfhood is relinquished in favor of brotherhood. Abigail is the major proponent of principled behavior, though it does

not emerge as Christianity until later, as a method or system for living together, as her often quoted first four words, "Not for my self" aptly indicate;[9] and the selfishness of Barabas primarily, but almost all of the other characters as well, finds its expression in the use of policy. Like the two other dualities, policy and religion are unresolvable; they fail to promote harmonious relations between individuals and groups, and in fact work to counter to any such harmony. Policy is used almost exclusively to destroy communities rather than solidify them, and the issue of Christianity is one that polarizes the characters, not one that harmonizes them. No middle ground between these extremes is found by the characters or developed thematically, and the two contrast showing again the inadequacy of two extreme positions.

Religion is first seriously discussed when Ferneze asserts infidelity as a reason for seizing gold from the Jews of the community. He maintains that Christianity can be a good basis for community, but instead of relying on Christian principles to form that basis, he prefers to depend of the profession or denunciation of Christian faith. He therefore feels it appropriate that Jews in a Christian community be punished:

> No, Jew, like infidels:
> For through our sufference of your hateful lives,
> Who stand accursed in the sight of heaven,
> These taxes and afflictions are befall'n: I,ii,62-65

He further justifies his action accusing Barabas of covetous, and maintaining he is protecting Barabas from this sin:

> If thou rely upon thy righteousness,
> Be patient, and thy riches will increase.
> Excess of wealth is cause of covetousness,
> And covetousness, O, 'tis a monstrous sin.
> I,ii,122-5

But Barabas clearly points out the fallacy in Ferneze's reasoning and shows that Fernese's action is not motivated by Christian principles of communal necessity, but on policy and individual prejudice and hatred. As Barabas says "policy, that's their profession, / And not simplicity, as they suggest."

In Abigail's comments and actions the basis of communal relations moves from the profession of principles to their realization. In helping her father to recover some of his wealth, she is acting out of a strong sense of justice,[10] as well as out of loyalty. She, of course, acts out of loyalty, but her loyalty and reaction to Barabas' having been wronged are obviously a far different basis than the we "both hate Christians" one which is at the heart of the Barabas-Ithamore relation. Although she is not yet a Christian, her belief in justice shows her heading in that direction. In her use of the Friar and the Abbess, types of professed holiness (and actual holiness in the case of the Abbess), she counters profession of principles with implementation of them. And unlike most of the actions in the play Abigail's helping her father is unselfish; she seems to take no particular selfish interest in her father's wealth, but is interested in his welfare, and thus aids him. Her principled moral

behavior and her desire for harmonious communal relations are interdependent, and the first is the means by which the second can be achieved. Her father's betrayal of her radicalizes, but does not change, her fundamental position, which is again the basis for a real community, with the nuns this time. (But her selflessness makes her again vulnerable to her father's cruelty, and though her relation with the nuns forms perhaps an ideal, truly Christian community, it seems to offer nothing to the self-seeking individuals who dominate the play. Her position, and the nunnery as a model community, are indeed irrelevant and would be stifling to the rampant self-interest in the play).

The moralistic ending of the play points to the inadequacy of religion in another way: the characters just aren't really religious. Like Ferneze's other rationalizations where he attributes human actions to heaven, the one which ends the play is unsatisfactory because of his hypocrisy and the obvious inaccuracy of his assertion. Abigail's position, on the other hand, is a truly religious one, and an ideal one, but one which simply cannot work for the characters in the play. Perhaps the greed of the friars best illustrates the pitfall of the community based on true Christianity; its members can be simply too worldly and even selfish for such spiritual, selfless system of organization to survive.

The opposing extreme of ruthless individualism and

selfhood is pursued through the use of policy, but this too, like the motivations behind its use, proves a failure.[11] Although policy is frequently successful for a short time, it ultimately leads to the downfall of all of its users, with the exception of Ferneze who escapes only through luck. Fernese's first use of policy in collecting the tribute for the Turks succeeds in raising the money, but backfires as Barabas seeks revenge which ultimately leads to the betrayal of the entire community. Ithamore, Bellamira, and Pilia-Borza are successful in extorting gold from Barabas, but that eventually leads to their deaths. And the friar's simple blackmail of Barabas is a resounding failure. Although Barabas' acts of policy accomplish their immediate goals they leave loose ends, which require other acts of policy to tie them up. Both Abigail and Ithamore know the details of the plot which killed Don Mathias and Lodowick and both reveal them, Abigail to the friar, and Ithamore to Bellamira and Pilia-Borza. Since Abigail knows of the murders, and because she has betrayed him by rejoining the nunnery, she and the nuns are killed. But again Ithamore knows all. The friar's discovery of the first plot on Lodowick and Don Mathias necessitates his death, (the other friar's death may also have been partially for this reason too, but that is not the reason given), and Ithamore's exposure of the truth necessitates his, Bellamira's and

Pilia-Borza's. The miscalculation of the deadly flower's poision allows enough time for Fernese to be informed of the Jew's treachery, and that in turn endangers Barabas' position in the community and with the governor. Barabas must therefore betray Malta and become governor to avoid Ferneze's condemnation of him. Thus each loose end forces Barabas to go further in the use of policy, and this causal chain does not end until he is governor. But as he has emphatically stated in the first scene, he does not want to be governor, and indeed realizes that his life is in great danger as long as he holds that office. This is one of the great ironies of the play: Barabas can make his position secure only by gaining control over the entire community, but in doing that he has endangered himself in another way, and assumed a responsibility he does not want.

Though policy is the method by which individuals attempt to satisfy personal desires, it invariably fails that purpose. The few successful examples of the use of policy are instances where it has been used for the benefit of one community over another. The Spaniards, for example, are successful in forcing Ferneze and the Maltese to sell Turkish slaves for their own profit. Similarly, policy is successful when Barabas and the Turks use it to take Malta; the process is reversed and Malta is restored to Ferneze and its own people by another

successful use of policy. This ironic success of policy when it is not used solely for individual gain illustrates the mistake in using it as a method for self-realization. Not only the goal of self-realization is inadequate, but the method with which it is pursued is also deficient.

The same basic problem of the paradoxical relation of self and community is also evident in Barabas' motivations, in so far as his actions are motivated by real psychological desires. In considering motivation here one is discussing the problem of the relation of self to community, for in defining motivations, what he desires and expects from them becomes implicitly evident. As his motivations determine his actions which are in turn important to the community, his motivations obviously have ramifications for the problem of self and community. Many of his actions, however, are simply inexplicable; he simply does things, often without reasons. Even when he shows evidence of attempting to fulfill a desire or set of desires, a psychological explanation is frequently not totally sufficient. Some examples of this are his "As for myself, I walk abroad a' nights" speech, his trusting of Ferneze in a final act of treachery, and even the extension of his revenge past the recovery of some of his wealth is not totally understandable. But despite these instances Barabas does seem to show two particular desires fairly consistantly throughout

the play.

The first is characterized by the play's most memorable metaphor:

> And thus methinks should men of judgement frame
> Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,
> And as their wealth increaseth, so enclose
> Infinite riches in a little room. I,i,34-37

As Barabas would have "Men of judgement" withdraw "their means of traffic," he intends throughout the play to withdraw himself from the community of Malta. He does not want to use policy to gain control of Malta, but wishes to have his revenge and withdraw to a secure position. Two of his early comments, the aside where he sanctions the ruin of the entire town if his daughter, his wealth, and himself can be saved, and his "Give us a peaceful rule; make Christians kings," seem to indicate his interest in security and alienated non-involvement in the "vulgar trade." When the series of the loose ends of his crimes is finally tied up and he is governor of Malta he predictably opts for security and withdrawl.

His second desire is for admiration and this one can be traced more completely through the play. The first concrete instance of this comes in his conversation with the first merchant, and demonstrates the kind of respect he wants from the community of Malta. He expects the mention of his name to be enough to warrant credit in the custom house, and his

expectation of admiration is evident in his statement: "Tush, who amongst 'em knows not Barabas?" He continually receives this respect from the three Jews, but resents the superficiality of it: they never perceive his selfish motives or presumably the clever use of policy in realizing them. He judges their reaction to the loss of all his wealth as insufficient, and rants in the manner of a typical tragic hero trying to impress them and the audience of the magnitude of his loss:

> O silly brethern, born to see this day,
> Why stand you thus unmoved with my laments?
> Why weep you not to think upon my wrongs?
> Why pine not I and die in this distress? I,ii,171-4

The comparison to Job is rejected with Barabas maintaining he has suffered a greater loss, though he considers only the loss of Job's money.[12] Once the Jews exit we see that these speeches were only rhetorical, asserting his superiority in a way in which "base slaves," as he calls them, could appreciate it. But the audience has also been tricked,[13] as we realize in the following soliloquy that Barabas is not really experiencing great suffering. He approaches his appeal for admiration in a different way in the soliloquy, by rejecting the role of victim and convincing the audience of his high aspirations, willfullness, and superior cunning:

> See the simplicity of these base slaves,
> Who-for the villians have no wit themselves-
> Think me to be a senseless lump of clay
> That will with every water wash to dirt.
> No, Barabas is born to better chance
> And framed of finer mold than common men
> That measure nought but by the present time.
> A reaching thought will search his deepest wits
> And cast with cunning for the time to come,
> For evils are apt to happen every day. I,ii,215-24

After having been tricked our feelings here are ambivalent, but some respect for his superiority is elicited nevertheless.

Both of these rhetorical tacks, and another one, are evident in his relation to his daughter. We must surmise that his daughter is dear to him since he has included her with himself and his wealth in explaining in an aside just what he wants to save from the Turks and Ferneze. The reference to the similarity between what he feels for his daughter and what Agamemnon felt for his, is beautifully ambiguous, and does not indicate, as some critics insist, that he has no feelings for her; as with Agamemnon it is an indication of degree. When she first appears (after the property has been seized and the other Jews give up their attempts at consolation) we see the rhetorician at work again assuming a quiet resigned attitude similar to the one Abigail displays throughout:

> No, Abigail. Things past recovery
> Are hardly cured with exclamations.
> Be silent, daughter. Sufferance breeds ease,
> And time may yield us an occasion,
> Which on the sudden cannot serve the turn. I,ii,237-41

But the audience knows that this is not resignation, but quiet confidence, and Barabas goes on to explain his clever foresight in hiding some of his gold and jewels, thus wanting her to admire the same qualities for which he demands admiration from the audience. Yet he does this in a sedate manner of which Abigail approves:

> Besides, my girl, think me not so fond
> As negligently to forgo so much
> Without provision for thyself and me,
> Ten thousand purtagues, besides great pearls,
> Rich costly jewels, and stones infinite,
> Fearing the worst before it fell,
> I closely hid. I,ii,242-8

The other two rhetorical positions we have seen are used again when Barabas learns that the nuns already have possession of his house. He passionately begins addressing the "partial heavens" and "luckless stars," just as he had earlier evoked "The plagues of Egypt and the curse of heaven" to revenge Ferneze and his men, perhaps "catching" the audience again, just as he "caught" us and the Jews before. We have some sympathy for this position where he is the victim of fortune and the Christians, but he again makes his appeal on other terms as well. He assers his will to live with "No, I will live; nor loathe I this my life," and vows to "make bar of no policy." His speeches and the injustice of the seizure of the wealth convince Abigail, and the audience through her, to assist her father in using policy to recover the hidden wealth:

> Father, whate'er it be to injure them
> That have so manifestly wronged us,
> What will not Abigail attempt? I,ii,277-6

Barabas succeeds here in accomplishing his goal, he has Abigail's respect and love from the outset, but wins her over as an accomplice in policy. And making it an even further success, she continually asks "how?" at each step in the plan, relying, just as he wishes, on his cunning.

The partnership fails when as Harry Levin[14] puts it, Barabas "fails to reckon with love," but Barabas never views it as his betrayal of Abigail, but hers of him. Although it is clear to the audience that Abigail is reluctant to be an accomplice in the plot against Don Mathias and Lodowick, which she does not understand fully until both are dead, Barabas seems neither to realize nor care about her feelings in the matter. He can believe that her becoming a nun is "false and unkind" because she "varies from [him] in belief." She no longer honors him or his beliefs and that constitutes betrayal for him. Even Ithamore asks "Do you not sorrow for your daughter's death?" but Barabas' reply indicates the depth of his feeling of having been betrayed:

> No, but I grieve because she lived so long,
> An Hebrew born and would become a Christian. IV,i,17-18

Barabas' motivation in the relationship with Ithamore is the same one we have seen before, but here he tries to impress Ithamore only with his sinister cunning and almost

pure evil. The need for an accomplice once Abigail has recovered the gold is questionable; he could have gotton any boy in the street to deliver the poisioned food to the nunnery, and he could have murdered the friar without help, but he wants an accomplice who will admire the ingenuity of his schemes. In his first conversation with Ithamore he impresses him with the list of past villianies in the famous "As for myself, I walk abroad a nights? And kill sick people groaning under walls" speech. As David Bevington[15] and others point out, he assumes the role of the Medieval Vice here claiming responsibility for all evil, but although this may reveal inate qualities in Barabas, it is obviously also a rhetorical device to win and hold the confidence of Ithamore, and to establish the foundation of their relationship. Beginning with "We are villians both" and continuing, after learning of Abigail's conversion, with "Come hear, my love," "my second self," and "I here adopt thee for mine only heir," Barabas tries to build a close or at least secure relationship with Ithamore. He has no intentions of a permanent alliance with Ithamore or of leaving Ithamore his wealth, which he views as an enticement:

> Thus every villian ambles after wealth,
> Although he ne'er be richer than in hope. III,iv,50-51

And ironically, the seeds for Ithamore's betrayal of the Jew,

the relationship with Bellamira, have already been planted a few scenes earlier (in III,i). But Barabas does receive admiration from Ithamore, both in the poisioning of the nuns and the plot on the friars. After Barabas' witch-like curse over the cauldron Ithamore responds with "What a blessing has he given't! Was ever a pot of rice porridge so sauced?" and he certainly enjoys the scheme which leads to the death of the friars, particularly when he and Barabas banter with the friar who thinks he has just murdered the other friar:

> Fie upon'em master. Will you turn Christian when friars turn devils and murder one another? IV,iii,32-33

Barabas' confiding in and befriending Ferneze in the final act is similar to the relationship with Ithamore, except he now daringly expects a former enemy to become a friend and accomplice. His ignoring of the history between them, and expecting Ferneze's assistance are only partially explicable. Again the need for such an accomplice is questionable; Barabas as easily as Ferneze could have been the one to pull the rope, or if not he himself, he could have someone other than Ferneze do it. But Barabas wants to win admiration from Ferneze and for that reason proclaims "'Tis not thy life which can avail me aught." In all of his revenge on Christians and the community of Malta in general, and on Ferneze in particular, it is curious that Ferneze's death is not the goal: Barabas is not revenging the loss

of his gold, much of which was recovered from the nunnery. In plotting the death of Lodowick and Don Mathias we see clearly that the hunger for gold is not the motivation for his actions. After Abigail has taken Lodowick inside, and Barabas gloats "The account is made, for Lodowick dies" he interjects this comment, unrelated to the plot, revealing what his motivation is not:

> My factor sends me word a merchant's fled
> That owes me for a hundred tun of wine.
> I weigh it thus much (snapping his fingers).
> I have wealth enough II,iii,210-2

Barabas is not revenging the loss of gold, but the loss of stature in the eyes of the community, therefore it is not Ferneze's death that is sought, but Ferneze's realization of his sinister ingenuity. It is evident in Barabas' question to Ferneze: "What wilt thou give me..." that the money he expects to receive is but a measure of the esteem he will attain from the freeing of Malta:

> What wilt thou give me, governor, to procure
> A dissolution of the slavish bonds
> Wherein the Turk hath yoked your land and you?
> What will you give me if I render you
> The life of Calymath, surprise his men,
> And in an out-house of the city shut
> His soldiers till I have consumed 'em all with fire?
> What will you give him that procureth this? V,ii,76-83

The entire scheme is pridefully explained in act V, scene v to an admiring accomplice who responded with "O, excellent!", but again Barabas is betrayed. Even after the betrayal, in

his dying speech, Barabas attempts to make Ferneze and the others understand his ingenious cunning, and the control over Ferneze and the community of Malta, that comes from using it:

> Know, Governor, 'twas I that slew thy son.
> I framed the challenge that did make them meet.
> Know, Calymath, I aimed thy overthrow,
> And had I but escaped this stratagem,
> I would have brought confussion on you all,
> Damned Christians, dogs, and Turkish infidels!
> V,v,81-6

Barabas' desire for admiration continuously involves him in the fundamental tension of the play, between self and community. He needs others because he needs their respect, but he recognizes no obligations toward them· he wants one-sided relationships. Furthermore he wants the isolation and security of his enclosure metaphor. There is another instance of withdrawl in the play, in the nuns who wish to shun the evils of the everyday world; the Abbess even comments on this desire in the first three of her eight lines:

> The better; for we love not to be seen.
> 'Tis thirty winters long since some of us
> Did stray so far amongst the multitude. I,ii,306-8

But their position, though one vulnerable to the policy of Barabas, is at least fullfilling in one sense, and that is the salvation they presumably achieve. Barabas' need for admiration, on the other hand, contradicts and destroys his desire for withdrawl. These two desires seem to be fulfilled simultaneously only before Ferneze implements his

plan to raise the tribute; Barabas is alone in his counting house demanding, and receiving to some degree, from the other merchants, and from the audience, deserved admiration. After this, though, Barabas has lost the admiration of the community, or illusion of it, and through his revenge is drawn further and further into the community of Malta, until he finally finds himself in the position of maximum involvement, the office of governor. Throughout the play his selfish, egotistical desires clash with his need for community (as admirers, accomplices, and to be used) and like this clash of paradoxical premises on all the other levels, each position destroys the other without creating a new moderate one. This is indeed a play of tension between poles, and of the destruction and failure of extremes. It ends not triumphantly as Ferneze would have it, but emptily and searchingly, still asking the question which provides its tension.

Footnotes:

[1] T.S. Eliot, "Christopher Marlowe," Selected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1932) rpt. in Clifford Leech, Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays, "Twentieth Century Views" (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, enc, 1964) p 16.

[2] Douglas Cole, Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 123-144.

[3] Observed by Kirschbaum in this introduction to Leo Kirschbaum, ed. The Plays of Christopher Marlowe (New York: World Publishing Co., 1962) p.134.

[4] Harry Levin, The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 87

[5] The point that half of the play works in one direction, and half in the other needs some qualification. I have called this the major pattern in our response, but their are also many minor, more frequent shifts of response. Since these are much more difficult to define, involve shades in ambivalent feelings subject to more personal interpretations, and make the same major point I will not discuss them in meticulous detail.

[6] The suggestion is borrowed from Levin, p. 86

[7] This is also maintained by David Bevington, "The Jew of Malta," Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) rpt. in Clifford Leech, Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays, "Twentieth Century Views" Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall Inc., 1964) pp. 150

[8] The term is from Levin, p. 87.

[9] This often cited fact was first notices by Levin, pp.90-91.

[10] Bevington, as well, suggests this, p. 151.

[11] The word policy is used very losely by the characters in the play to refer to any act of injustice or deception; thus Ferneze's seizure of the Jew's wealth, Barabas' clever revenge plots, and Ithamore's, Bellamira's, and Pilia-Borza's blackmail can all be called policy.

12 Observation made by Cole, p. 124

13 Bevington notices this too, p. 150.

14 Levin, p. 99.

15 Bevington, pp. 151-152.

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VONNEGUT'S VIEW OF ART, AND OF HIMSELF AS AN ARTIST: A READING OF HIS NOVELS

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Much of the critical attention Kurt Vonnegut has received has been directed to his conceptions of writing and himself as a writer. He has frequently been asked about the subject in interviews, but has not really explicated any encompassing theory about his writing. Although Peter Reed[1] discusses Vonnegut's view of writing, and of himself as a writer, in his analysis of Mother Night; that Vonnegut carefully and elaborately embeds within the novels themselves conceptions of Vonnegut the writer, and of the act of writing, has generally gone unnoticed. A close look at his novels, however, seems to show this.

His latest novel, Breakfast of Champions, is a case in point. In the introduction he straightforwardly offers a specific purpose for this novel:

> I'm throwing out characters from my other books, too. I'm not going to put on any more puppet shows. (p. 5)

Vonnegut's recognition of the pattern of recycling his characters is certainly one of the reasons why he has come to write a novel about writing and its consequences. He is a man obsessed by the characters he has created, as well as by the metaphors he has used. Many of the characters have appeared in two or more novels: Kilgore Trout in three, Eliot Rosewater in three, The Rumford family in three, and Howard Campbell in two. But settings, which like

[1] Peter Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. "Writers for the Seventies" (New York: Warner Books, 1972), pp. 88-118

the characters are primarily metaphorical, reappear too. Almost all of the novels are set in or concern someone from either Illium, New York, or Indianapolis, Indiana; and Dresden and the planet Traflamadore are each mentioned in at least two books. Even phrases are borrowed from earlier novels; "Poo-tee-weet?" and the dog sounding like a "big bronze gong" both from Slaughterhouse Five, are two examples. So the pattern of reusing or recycling is one of Vonnegut's trademarks, and serves to show that he is obsessed not only by the actual situations his metaphors represent, but by the use of particular metaphors as well. In short, he seems obsessed by his own writing, and his stated reason for writing Breakfast of Champions is to rid himself of the obsession with these particular means of self expression.

But Breakfast of Champions concerns more about writing than just the very personal preoccupation. The questions of why one should write, and the consequences of writing are central themes. In terms of plot, the novel continually moves toward the meeting of Kilgore Trout and Dwayne Hoover, with Dwayne going completely crazy, and Trout learning a valuable lesson as a consequence. Trout's lesson is of course, the thematic focus of the book, for he learns the importance of a writer's projecting good or

bad ideas.

Vonnegut states this simple theme as early as Chapter 1. Dwayne Hoover was slowly going insane as a result of "bad chemicals," but, "like all novice lunatics, needed some bad ideas, too, so that his craziness could have shape and direction." He explains his formula for madness in maintaining that "bad chemicals and bad ideas were the Yin and Yang of madness." Kilgore Trout is, of course, the supplier of Dwayne's bad ideas, but this instance of having been a mind poisoner teaches him the importance of ideas. Trout imagined he was "harmless," "invisible," and even "dead," "but he learned from his encounter with Dwayne that he was alive enough to give a fellow human being ideas which would turn him into a monster." Learning the obvious lesson Trout begins to proclaim that "ideas or the lack of them can cause disease," and with the succinctness and didacticism of a Kilgore Trout plot, Vonnegut has Trout become famous for the development of this theory:

> Kilgore Trout became pioneer in the field of mental health. He advances his theories disguised as science-fiction. He died in 1981, almost twenty years after he made Dwayne Hoover so sick. He was by then recognized as a great artist and scientist. (pp. 15-16)

Much more elaboration of this theme comes during the course of the book. Throughout the novel there are several

references to the insignificance with which art is often viewed. When riding in the truck on the way to Midland City Festival of the Arts, Trout did not tell the driver he was a writer because he "understood that honest working people has no use for the arts." Until the "spiritual climax" of the novel, Vonnegut seems to agree, as evidenced by his discussion of the relevance of art to Eldon Robbins, the black dishwasher at the Holiday Inn's restaurant and cocktail lounge:

> He had no use for works of art, except for cheap and simple ones which weren't meant to live very long. (p. 213)

One of the jokes running through several of Vonnegut's novels is Kilgore Trout's anonymity. In expanding the joke a bit, the truck driver tells Trout a story about using books and magazines as toilet paper in the jail in Libertyville, Georgia, and naturally the only thing the truck driver has read in years is a piece of toilet paper by Kilgore Trout. Following the joke further, Trout's book, or toilet paper, is about a planet on which works of art are valued absolutely arbitrarily by spinning a wheel to determine what was of value and what was worthless.

But the novel finally insists that art and the ideas contained therein are very important. Trout and/or

Vonnegut speaking through him, offers an insight as to why ideas have not generally been appreciated as important. In his most popular novel, Plague on Wheels, he explains why humans did not reject ideas that were bad:

> "Ideas on Earth were badges of friendship or enmity. Their content did not matter. Friends agreed with friends, in order to express friendliness. Enemies disagreed with enemies, in order to express enmity.
> "The ideas Earthlings held didn't matter for hundreds of thousands of years, since they couldn't do much about them anyway. Ideas might as well be badges as anything.
> "They even had a saying about the futility of ideas: 'If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.'
> "And then Earthlings discovered tools. Suddenly agreeing with friends could be a form of suicide or worse. But agreements went on, not for the sake of common sense or decency or self-preservation, but for friendliness.
> "Earthlings went on being friendly, when they should have been thinking instead. And even when they built computers to do some thinking for them, they designed them not so much for wisdom as for friendliness. So they were doomed. Homicidal beggars could ride." (p 28)

But the consequences of accepting bad ideas go much further than Dwayne Hoover's insanity, even if the fully developed insanity precipitated by Trout is a symbol for such acceptance. In Kilgore Trout's journey to Midland city there is example after example of mankind unthinkingly accepting bad ideas. The degenerate state of New York's Forty-Second Street, the violence there, and the destruction of the countrysides of New Jersey and West Virginia are all examples of mankind's stupidity; as is the treatment of

Blacks, which is repeatedly referred to, and the concept of private ownership by a few which creates poverty for the many. But despite Vonnegut's profuse illustration of this, he offers an excuse for people most obviously responsible, and places the blame on bad ideas in art:

> I had no respect whatsoever for the creative works of either the painter or of the novelist. I thought Karabekian with his meaningless pictures had entered into a conspiracy with millionaires to make poor people feel stupid. I thought Beatrice Keedsler had joined hands with other old-fashioned storytellers to make people believe that life had leading characters, minor characters, significant details, insignificant details, that it had lessons to be learned, tests to be passed, and a beginning, a middle, and an end.
> As I approached my fiftieth birthday, I had become more and more enraged and mystified by the idiot decisions made by my countrymen. And I had come suddenly to pity them, for I understood how innocent and natural it was for them to behave so abominably, and with such abominable results: They were doing their best to live like people invented in story books. This was the reason Americans shot each other so often: It was a convenient literary device for ending short stories and books.
> Why were so many Americans treated by their government as though their lives were as disposable as paper facial tissues? Because that was the way authors customarily treated bit-part players in their made-up tales.
> And so on.
> Once I understood what was making America such a dangerous, unhappy nation of people who had nothing to do with real life, I resolved to shun storytelling. I would write about life. Every person would be exactly as important as any other. All facts would also be given equal weightiness. Nothing would be left out. Let others bring order to chaos. I would bring chaos to order, instead, which I think I have done.
> If all writers would do that, then perhaps citizens not in the literary trades will understand

> that there is no order in the world around us, that we must adapt ourselves to the requirements of chaos instead.
> It is hard to adapt to chaos, but it can be done, I am living proof of that: It can be done.
> (pp. 209-210)

This seems to suggest that novels should be absolutely realistic, at least in some sense. In "the spiritual climax" of the book this seems to be qualified or more fully defined. At this point Vonnegut claims "that I, the author, am suddenly transformed by what I have done so far." He says he had come to the conclusion "that there was nothing sacred about myself or about any human being," and that we were all machines." But Karabekian's explanation of his painting changes that, restoring Vonnegut's faith in the validity of art, and probably justifying the lack of conventional realism in his novels.

> "I now give you my word of honor," he went on, "that the picture your city owns shows everything about life which truly matters, with nothing left out. It is a picture of the awareness of every animal. It is the immaterial core of every animal -- that 'I am' to which all messages are sent. It is all that is alive in any of us-- in a mouse, in a deer, in a cocktail waitress. It is unwavering and pure, no matter what preposterous adventure may befall us. A sacred picture of Saint Anthony alone is one vertical, unwavering band of light. If a cockroach were near him, or a cocktail waitress, the picture would show two such bands of light. Our awareness is all that is alive and maybe sacred in any of us. Everything else about us is dead machinery."
> (p. 221)

Vonnegut is definitely not arguing for realism, but for an expression of truth that is stripped of cumbersome and irrelevant details as he suggests later:

> I could go on and on with the intimate details about the various lives of people on the super-ambulance, but what good is more information?
> I agree with Kilgore Trout about realistic novels and their accumulations of nit-picking details. In Trout's novel The Pan-Galactic Memory Bank, the hero is on a space ship two hundred miles long and sixty-two miles in diameter. He gets a realistic novel out of the branch library in his neighborhood. He reads about sixty pages of it, and then takes it back.
> The librarian asks him why he doesn't like it, and he says to her, "I already know about human beings."
> And so on. (p. 278)

Breakfast of Champions, however, is not the first novel in which Vonnegut has given direct thematic consideration to the problems of the writer. Although quite a different novel in style, structure, and scope of presentation of theme, Mother Night concerns very similar themes reaching similar conclusions. Even Vonnegut's simplified "morals" reveal the thematic kinship of the two novels. His claim that "we are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be" is clearly related to and extended by Trout's "ideas or the lack of them can cause disease." In Mother Night the major concern is for the consequences of being an artist, or more generally of being the creator of pretense and consideration of Mother Night reveals Vonnegut's early interest in writing about writing, and adds significantly to what Vonnegut has to say about the subject.

The novel, though supposedly "edited" by Vonnegut, is narrated by Howard Campbell Jr., whose "confessions" provide

the exemplum for the "moral." Being a double agent in World War Two, a spy for the Americans and a propagandist for the Germans, he provides a clear vehicle for considering the relation of pretense and reality. But as early as when he is asked to become a spy, any clear distinction between the real and the pretense begins to break down. He had taken the position that if war broke out he could continue to work at his "peaceful trade" of writing plays, and he admits that the best reason for becoming a spy is that he is a "ham." Obviously his motivation for becoming a double agent is not to support the side he regarded as "right," for he seems completely disinterested in politics. His only enthusiasm for the plan is that he would become an actor:

> As a spy of the sort he described, I would have an opportunity for some pretty grand acting. I would fool everyone with my brilliant interpretation of a Nazi, inside and out. (p. 41)

Hence, he continues to play the role of an artist and remains detached from politics. As playwright and as actor, Campbell can be considered as Vonnegut's metaphor for the artist.

When first becoming a spy, Campbell, as actor, very clearly saw his role as propagandist as a pretense quite different from "the honest [self he] hid so deep inside," but he later begins to see the deterioration of that

distinction when his Nazi father-in-law, who suspected him of being a spy, explains the importance and influence of Campbell as a propagandist:

> "Because you never served the enemy as well as you served us," he said. "I realized that almost all the ideas I hold now, that make me ashamed of anything I may have felt or done as a Nazi, came not from Hitler, not from Goebbels, not from Himmler-but from you."
> He took my hand. "You alone kept me from concluding that Germany had gone insane." (pp.80-1)

Nevertheless, As Vonnegut makes it increasingly clear that the "real" Campbell is playing both roles, he does not let the two selves merge into one. One of the most emotionally shattering events in Campbell's generally uncaring life is his unknowing broadcast news of his wife's disappearance. As he explains his reaction:

> It represented, I suppose, a wider separation of my several selves than even I can bear to think about. (p. 136)

That all of Campbell's several selves are equally real becomes explicit in his conversation with his Fairy Blue Godmother, the man who enlisted him as a spy:

> "How many people knew what I was doing?" I said.
> "The good things or the bad?" he said.
> "The good;" I said.
> "Three of us," he said.
> "That's all?" I said.
> "Three people in all the world knew me for what I was-" I said. "And all the rest-" I shrugged.
> "They knew you for what you were, too," he said abruptly.
> "That wasn't me," I said, startled by his sharpness.
> "Whoever it was-" said Wirtanen, "he was one of the most vicious sons of bitches who ever lived." (p. 138)

The reason for Campbell's confusion of pretense and reality is explained clearly by Kraft in the defense he offers for Campbell:

> ...[he] shouldn't be held responsible for [his] acts, since, [he] was a political idiot, an artist who could not distinguish between reality and dreams. (p. 189)

It is precisely because Campbell, as actor, is an artist, concerned with the creation of pretense, that he loses his sense of reality.

Many of the other characters also exemplify Vonnegut's theme of being what one pretends to be. Resi Noth pretends to be her sister Helga, and succeeds so well that the government of East Germany, Dr. Jones and company, and Campbell all treat her as Helga. And Bodovskov, the Russian who republishes all of Campbell's works, claims to be a playwright for so long that he finally becomes one and is consequently shot for "originality." But the example of Kraft brings the question back to the artist. He lives a schizophrenic life similar to Campbell's, simultaneously helping Campbell, in terms of both friendship and logistics for the escape from O'Hare and company and turning him over to the Russians. Kraft has built a Russian spy organization, but ironically almost all of his men are American agents. Artist and spy, however, is his primary duality, but unlike Campbell, he can sustain his schizo-

phrenia. When confronted with his ineptitude at the end of his career as a spy, he can comfortably claim "that none of this really concerns me, because I'm a painter." But Campbell realizes that he was both spy and propagandist, and must admit to as much. Finally, only Campbell's position is tenable, as he willingly accepts the totality of self, and views his schizophrenia, because it is the cause of his misery, as a crime against himself.

Through Campbell, Vonnegut also explores the idea of artist as confidence man. Certainly Campbell is a paradigm of this, but Bodovskov, the plagiarist, is another good example. But neither is executed on these ground. Bodovoskov is shot for really expressing himself for the first time, and Campbell's self-execution is for crimes against himself. The confidence-artist is not really condemned by Vonnegut either: Bodovskov is harmlessly amusing and Campbell feels no guilt for what he did. In fact Campbell views his actions as in keeping with the character of his world. His crimes are certainly not novel; as he says, they "are as ancient as Solomon's old gray stones." Generally, he is disgusted with the world, and finds it difficult to feel guilty about committing crimes in a world so full of crimes. The following is perhaps his best expression of his attitude toward the relation of himself and his world:

> I had hoped, as a broadcaster, to be merely ludicrous, but this is a hard world to be ludicrous in, with so many human beings reluctant to laugh, so incapable of thought, so eager to believe and snarl and hate. So many people wanted to believe me!
> Say what you will about the sweet miracle of unquestioning faith, I consider a capacity for it terrifying and absolutely vile. (p. 120)

Throughout his confessions Campbell is very careful to point out the differences between himself and the other fanatical people he encounters. Their actions can be attributed to various kinds of mental disorders, while Campbell is fully aware and rational, but also a victim of his delusion in that his real self is separate from the Nazi pose he takes. In clarifying the distinction between himself and Eichmann he claims that Eichmann "should be sent to the hospital, and that I am the sort of person for whom punishments by fair, just men were devised." But the most comprehensive explanation of differences in perceptions is Campbell's theory of mental gears:

> Jones wasn't completely crazy. The dismaying thing about the classic totalitarian mind is that any given gear, though mutilated, will have at its circumference unbroken sequences of teeth that are immaculately maintained, that are exquisitely machined.
> ...
> The missing teeth, of course, are simple, obvious truths, truths available and comprehensible even to ten-year olds, in most cases. The willful filing off of gear teeth, the willful doing without certain obvious pieces of information-
> That was how a household as contradictory as one composed of Jones, Father Keely, Vice-Bundesfuehrer, and the Black Fuehrer could exist in relative harmony-

> This was how my father-in-law could contain in one mind an indifference toward slave women — and love for a blue vase-
> That was how Rudolf Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz, could alternate over the loudspeakers of Auschwitz great music and calls for corpse-carriers-
> That was how Nazi Germany could sense no important differences between civilization and hydrophobia-
> That is the closest I can come to explaining the legions, the nations of lunatics I've seen in my time. ...
> But never have I willfully destroyed a tooth on a gear of my thinking machine. Never have I said to myself, "This fact I can do without."
> (pp. 162-3)

Hoess, Eichmann, Jones, the Black Fuehrer, and others simply find it convenient to ignore parts of reality, but for Campbell, and by implication for all artists, the creation of the artificial can obscure reality to such a degree that a sense of the real is lost. Though ignoring reality is inexcusable in either case, the artist, at least, can redeem himself by being "careful" about the pretense he creates.

But in addition to Campbell and Kraft, the "Editor" also represents one of the possible failings of the artist: he can be trivial. The "editor" of Mother Night is in a position to establish a perspective on Campbell other than Campbell's own, but fails to do so. He gives the reader very little insight into Campbell. His warning that Campbell might not be telling the complete truth:

> To say that he was a writer is to say that the demands of art alone were enough to make him lie, and to lie without seeing any harm in it. To say that he was a playwright is to offer an even harsher warning to the reader, for not one is a better liar than a man who has warped lives and passions onto something as grotesquely artificial as a stage. (p. ix)

is made completely ambiguous when he adds:

> And now that I've said that about lying, I will risk the opinion that lies told for the sake of artistic effect-in the theater, for instance, and in Campbell's confessions, perhaps-can be, in a higher sense the most beguiling forms of truth. (p. ix)

The "editor" offers an explanation for the title of the novel, and explains Campbell's wish to dedicate the book to himself, but on the whole does little to deepen the reader's view of Campbell.

The "Editor's Note" does serve a purpose in the novel though. By including the "Editor's Note" within the novel entitled Mother Night, Vonnegut establishes the presence of another voice in the novel. With the "editor" Vonnegut creates a second metaphor for the writer and shows that the writer can be trivial. His "editor" makes most of the conventional statments made by editors, explaining the difficulties and pitfalls of editing the particular material, citing all alterations in the text, and stating that he has corrected spelling and punctuation. But Vonnegut makes fun of his conspicuously uninspired "editor" by introducing subject matter which is comically unbelievable, and highly

inappropriate for the "editor's" mechanical style. The most notable instance of this is the elimination, at the insistance of the publisher's lawyer (a conventional way of including the excluded), of a claim of one of the Iron Guardsmen of the White Sons of the American Constitution, "I'm a better American than you are! My father invented 'I-Am-An-American Day'!'" on the grounds that though it was really said, it is untrue and slanderous to the actual founders. Vonnegut's second metaphor for the artist, the "editor," has a different shortcoming than Campbell, but, nevertheless, both work together to illustrate ways in which the artist can be inadequate. The "editor" is simply trivial and because of his acting Campbell is deceived about the true nature of the self.

Though Mother Night focuses on a slightly different area of the question of art than does Breakfast of Champions, the two novels together are a reasonably complete expression of Vonnegut's general view of art and the artist. The second looks primarily outward and is concerned with the consequences of audience reaction to art, while the first looks inward and concentrates on the generic artist (actor, writer, painter), leaving relatively unexplored and only implied the idea that the consequences of an audience's reaction to art should be an important concern for the artist. But Vonnegut is not just interested in generalities;

the problems or issues surrounding art in general certainly apply specifically to him. There are necessarily personal reasons for writing, and for writing about what he does, and for writing the way he does, and these specifics seem to preoccupy Vonnegut's mind even more than generalities. More often than not, within his novels he reflects on at least one of these personal aspects of his writing. Many critics are careful to show the supreme importance of biographical detail in his writings, and in introductions, and sometimes within the novels themselves, he willingly admits as much. But he goes further than this simple comment, and frequently exposes himself as a man and as a writer behind a fiction. He seems continually concerned with defining for himself and expressing to his reader the reason he writes about what he does in the way he does. Although his novels obviously look outward and comment on the world he sees, they also look inward to their author and examine his role. To this extent Vonnegut is a writer who is perhaps solipsistic, explicitly revealing personal meanings discovered within himself.

Although most of the novels reveal the author behind the fiction in some way, Breakfast of Champions is again the clearest and most obvious example. An indication of the way Vonnegut feels about his relation to his fictions is, again, his comment that he is "not going to put on any

more puppet shows." He obviously thinks that he is revealed quite clearly in his novels, with the suggestion that his characters are primarily one dimensional representations of particular ideas, which they are.

In Breakfast of Champions Vonnegut shows himself in the most straightforward way possible, simply discussing himself as the author in the process of writing the novel. Although his presence in the cocktail lounge during the meeting of Dwayne Hoover and Kilgore Trout is handled playfully, it certainly has serious ramifications as well. He refuses to let the artifice of characters within a novel attract all of the reader's attention, and continually forces the reader to see everything in the novel as the creations of one man. But the novel comfortably operates on two levels simultaneously, allowing the plight of the characters, particularly in the final madness of Dwayne, to be moving, while maintaining that the author's manipulation of them is a primary subject of the book. One can thematically analyze Breakfast of Champions using the same terms and techniques as in the analysis of most other novels (particularly non-contemporary ones). In so doing, characters and plot are taken at face value, but without undercutting the validity of this "face," Vonnegut insists that the novel must also be viewed as an artificial product of his mind.

This insistence is made in several ways: his presence and comments to the effect that he can make characters do as he wishes are the most obvious. But he also repeatedly identifies himself with both of his major characters. Age is a common denominator of the two characters and the author, and this is emphasized by Vonnegut's parallel phrasing. (pp. 24 & 120):

> When Dwayne was a boy, when Kilgore Trout was a boy, when I was a boy..... (p. 24)

In comparing himself with his character, Dwayne Hoover, Vonnegut has Dwayne come from the same geographical region as himself. And again using playful parallelism in language to emphasize similarities, both Dwayne and Vonnegut have charm:

> Dwayne Hoover had oodles of charm.
> I can have oodles of charm when I want to.
> A lot of people have oodles of charm. (p. 20)

The suicide of Dwayne's wife is also frequently compared to the suicide of Vonnegut's mother, whether it be real or imaginary.

The identification with Trout is even more striking. Of course both are science fiction writers, although the limits of this aspect of the comparison are not fully defined.[2] Similar to the parallel with Dwayne through his

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[2] The degree to which Vonnegut identifies with Trout, in this and other novels, will be discussed later, when the identification with Trout throughout the novels will be considered.

mother, is the borrowing of his father's legs for Kilgore Trout. Additionally, both Trout and Vonnegut suffer from the same mental disease of not being able to remember what a person looked like if he was not present. But going even further than this, Trout's and Vonnegut's voices seem to be the same in several places. A quite simple and less significant example is the discussion about the fixation with girls' underpants and gold. After Vonnegut has said:

> So there was a madness about wide-open beavers. There was also a madness about a soft, weak metal, an element, which had somehow been declared the most desirable of all elements, which was gold. (p. 24)

he has Trout reiterate the same idea in his dicussion of the two monsters that inhabited earth when he was a boy:

> They were the arbitrary lusts for gold, and God help us, for a glimpse of a little girls' underpants. (p. 25)

The two even use the same phrases, such as "doodley-squat" and "leeks." The explanation of why humans regarded ideas as unimportant badges of friendship or enmity, which comes from Trout's Plague on Wheels, certainly seems like the explanation Vonnegut is offering. And Trout's statement "ideas or the lack of them can cause disease" is obviously one of the thematic statements of the book.

Yet the most dominant and important technique for exposing the artist behind the artifice of the novel is simply style. The style continuously breaks down the very arti-

ficiality of words, refusing to allow vagueness or ambiguity. Everything must be literal and concrete. A purely verbal example of the breaking down of things to their simplest and most literal terms is the description of the "sea pirates" use of fire arms:

> ... they had gunpowder, which was a mixture of potassium nitrate, charcoal, and sulphur. They touched this seemingly listless powder with fire, and it turned violently into gas. This gas blew projectiles out of metal tubes at terrific velocities. The projectiles cut through meat and bone very easily, so the pirates could wreck the wiring or the bellows or the plumbing of a stubborn human being even when he was far, far away. (p. 12)

But words are frequently not concrete enough, and Vonnegut depends heavily on the use of drawings. Instead of an attempt at a verbal description, he simply says "it looks like this." The early example of the word "beaver" clearly illustrates what he does through style. The metaphorical meaning of the work is not allowed to stand alone, but must be accompanied by a verbal description of the animal called a beaver, and pictures of both the actual and metaphorical beavers. And Vonnegut quite intentionally demonstrates his style with a pornographic example, because he wants to suggest that Breakfast of Champions is somewhat like pornography in being a kind of self-indulgent exhibitionism. With his style, and his early opinion of Rabo Karabekian as a "vain and weak and trashy man," he is also projecting an image of the writer though it is later transformed as childishly preoccupied with the self. One of the results of this

very domineering style is the same as that of the identifications, and of the direct comments of his manipulation: he wishes to consider the reality under the artifice. As he is literal about what is said and shown in the novel, he wants to be literal about the book itself, and the literal truth is, of course, that the book is all a product of his imagination. But this is obviously true of all novels, so Vonnegut must use this fact to show something in terms of himself to make it worth all the trouble of establishing it so exceedingly clearly.

Certainly part of the significance of the novel for Vonnegut is the ridding of obsessions he discussed in his preface, and the bidding farewell to his characters which comes near the end. But these have importance only in regard to his cannon as a whole, and do not really add significantly to the meaning of Breakfast of Champions as an individual work. But what is important for this novel is that he sees the climax of the book in terms of his feelings about art in general, and his art in particular. His dismay at the social irrelevance of art, the self indulgent vanity of artists, and the mechanical quality of his own writing is changed to fulfillment as he realizes the sacred value of the "bands of light" within every living creature, of the unadorned expression of them, and the expression of his own "awareness," his "I am":

> And now comes the spiritual climax of this book, for it is at this point that I, the author, am suddenly transformed by what I have done so far. This is why I had gone to Midland City: to be born again. And Chaos announced that it was about to give birth to a new me by putting these words in the mouth of Rabo Karabekian:...
> And my own pre-earthquake condition must be taken into consideration, too, since I was the one who was being reborn. Nobody else in the cocktail lounge was reborn, as far as I know. The rest got their minds changed, some of them, about the value of modern art.
> As for myself: I had come to the conclusion that there was nothing sacred about myself or about any human being, that we were all machines, doomed to collide and collide and collide. For want of anything better to do, we became fans of collisions. Sometimes I wrote well about collisions, which meant I was a writing machine in good repair. Sometimes I wrote badly, which meant I was a writing machine in bad repair. I no more harbored sacredness than did a Pontiac, a mousetrap, or a South Bend Lathe. I did not expect Rabo Karabekian to rescue me. I had created him, and he was in my opinion a vain and weak and trashy man, no artist at all. But it is Rabo Karabekian who made me the serene Earthling which I am this day. (pp. 218-220)

But this is the second, rather than the first, time that Vonnegut has straightforwardly appeared in one of his novels as its author; the first is in Slaughterhouse Five. His objective in both cases seems to be the same: to relate the act of writing to his personal search for peace of mind.

The first chapter of Slaughterhouse Five concentrates on the events leading to the writing of the novel, and on Vonnegut's difficulty, over the years, in writing his "Dresden Book." Upon returning from the war, he thought it would be easy to write a best-selling "masterpiece" by simply describing the horrible fire-bombing of Dresden, but instead, he found it a very difficult subject:

> But not many words about Dresden came from my mind then-not enough of them to make a book, anyway. And not many words come now, either... (p. 2)

When asked what he was doing, his usual reply was that he was writing a book about Dresden. So the subject has seemed to obsess him from the time of the war, and as he finally comes to terms with it he presents Slaughterhouse Five to his publisher with "Sam- here's the (Dresden) book." And the purpose of the autobiographical first chapter seems to be to present it to the reader in the same terms. In essence he is asking the book to be viewed as the final result of his personal struggle with his Dresden experience.

Though the explicit presence of Vonnegut as author is limited to a few comments in chapters two through nine, he again establishes a parallel with his main character, bringing himself into the novel in another way. From the autobiographical information given in the first chapter, we know that he, like his character, Billy Pilgrim, was a prisoner of war who survived the bombing of Dresden. Other characters and events are based on autobiography as well: Edgar Derby, who was executed in the ruins of Dresden for stealing a teapot, and Lassaro and his threats, are derived from real people. Given the explicit presence of the author, in the first and last chapters, the importance of autobiographical detail, the parallel with Billy Pilgrim, the comments to the effect of "I was there" (pp. 58, 109, 129, 140),

and the phone call into the novel where "Billy could almost smell his breath-mustard gas and roses," one can hardly fail to lose sight of Kurt Vonnegut writing his "Dresden book."

Although the first chapter of Slaughterhouse Five is similar in tone and purpose to the preface of Breakfast of Champions, Vonnegut's presence through most of the novel is primarily implicit rather than explicit. And because of the few explicit references cited above (especially the "I was there" comments), Vonnegut's presence in Dresden remains implicit throughout the novel. But a much more sophisticated way of establishing himself as a thematic focus, is his attempt to approximate, with his fiction about Billy Pilgrim, a Tralfamadorian novel. He thereby identifies himself with the transcendence of time and the resignation to the inevitable represented by the metaphor of Tralfamadore.

On the title page he begins to establish similarities, at least formal ones, between Tralfamadorian novels and his own:

> This is a novel somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore, where the flying saucers come from.

Later in the book the Tralfamadorians who kidnap Billy show him one of their novels and it is composed of "clumps of symbols separated by stars," which Billy suggests look like telegrams. The Tralfamadorians give him some idea of

how these "clumps" or "telegrams" are used to create a novel:

> "There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right: each clump of symbols is a brief urgent message- describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once; they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time." (p. 76)

In almost all respects Slaughterhouse Five approximates this definition. In the form Vonnegut tells it, there is no beginning, middle, or end to the story of Billy's life, as he continuously travels from one moment to another in his contained infinity. Though it could be put chronologically for the purposes of his novel, Vonnegut refuses to do so. There is no suspense in the novel, (though there is a climax) because Billy's life is experienced non-sequentially. As for suspense in regard to the other characters, if they do not die shortly after their appearance, or if we are not told how they are going to die, as is the case with Edgar Derby, there is so much destruction throughout the novel that we come to expect and become indifferent to the worst. In the sense that a moral is a clear maxim which is exemplified by a story (as Vonnegut uses the term in his introduction to Mother Night) Slaughterhouse Five has no moral; Vonnegut's

feelings about how one can deal with human atrocity are subtle and ambiguous. And because causes and effect suggest that things could have been otherwise, there is little of either.

The simultaneity of the Tralfamadorian novel is simulated, but not reproduced by the spatialized, fragmented history of Billy's life, because, of course, everything can not be read at once. Given that Vonnegut is an Earthling writing for Earthlings, he must accept the limitations of linear time, and only approximate Tralfamadorian form. The "clumps" must have sequential order, although the overall effect is one of simultaneity.

The entire concept of the Tralfamadorian novel is, of course an invention of Vonnegut's but in labeling the formal aspects of his novel as Tralfamadorian he has a clear purpose. Given the atrocities with which he is faced, he choses to accept the values of the Tralfamadorians. There is apparently nothing Vonnegut can do to prevent human atrocities though his implicit anger with them suggests he must try; consequently, like the Tralfamadorians, he must accept them once they occur. But even if atrocities are inevitable, and Vonnegut is unable to prevent them, like the Tralfamadorians he affirms the value of both life and art. In a universe full of atrocities and individuals unable to avert them, beauty is still possible in art, and Vonnegut still has value as an artist. Tralfamadorian novels

present "an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep," and by implication Vonnegut and other Earthling artists can do the same.

But Vonnegut identifies with the Tralfamadorians in another way as well; like them he is a time traveler, even if his human limitations again allow him to only approximate the Tralfamadorian version. His time travel has two basic forms: mental revisiting of past events in his own life (the very act of writing Slaughterhouse Five does this), and time traveling through literature. The memory of his own war and post-war experiences in the first chapter, and even the several examples of the re-use of characters, settings, and metaphors that he used in earlier novels are examples of the first form of his personal time travel. But the second form seems to be the more significant, as it seems to help Vonnegut conceptually deal with the problems Dresden symbolizes.

From Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds Vonnegut gets information about the Childrens' Crusade, which is the subtitle of the novel, and which serves as a symbol for all the displays of the inadequacies and inappropriateness of his characters who are forced to play the role of soldier. Billy and two of his teen-age captors are certainly described by this symbol, as is Roland Weary, who, for all his enthusiasm about war, does not understand its

realities. Dresden, History, Stage and Gallery begins to explain all of the beauty that was destroyed in the bombing, and intensifies Vonnegut's sense of the terrible destruction of something wonderful. In Roethke's Words for the Wind he finds a quatrain that expresses his feelings about the way men deal with fate. And from Erika Ostrovsky's Celine and His Vision comes a very relevant discussion of Celine's obsession with death and his attempt to stop time; transcending time is of course the way in which Tralfamadorians conquer death. The two forwards to David Irving's The Destruction of Dresden show the paradox about Dresden which seems to have troubled Vonnegut for so long. It was a terrible event on one hand, but had to be done, or was in some sense inevitable, on the other. And finally, the comparison of himself to Lot's wife recognizes the basic humanness of looking back, in spite the horrors one sees when doing so.

All of these literary time travels are important in helping Vonnegut come to terms with Dresden, and his desire to reveal them seems to indicate the extreme value he gives to time traveling His revelation of his time travels indicates the importance and function of literature as well, for through literature Vonnegut is able to transcend time, and better understand the inevitability of atrocity and death. Thus literature can free people from linear time, showing them, and helping them accept, existential conditions

of human life. By affirming art in this way Vonnegut overcomes his inability to prevent seemingly needless death, and validates his position as a writer.

Billy Pilgrim's association with Tralfamadore, however is a sharp contrast to Vonnegut's, and is meant to clarify and more fully define Vonnegut's. With Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut shows the ways in which time travel and the Tralfamadorean concept of death are unacceptable. Billy, too, is a time traveler, but the nature of his travel is quite different from Vonnegut's. Billy has no control over his; there is no pattern to it; he is a helpless creature at the mercy of random time travel. But he can see past, present, and future, though they are all the same to him. After describing the plaque on the wall of Billy's optometrist's office, Vonnegut comments: "Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future." (p. 52) In contrast, Vonnegut can travel only backward in time, but can control his travel. For him there are important differences between past, present, and future. He uses time travel to understand and accept the past, but not as an excuse to evade responsibility in the present and future. Vonnegut's time travel is attractive and used to understand the present, but Billy's is grotesque and nihilistic. Like the Tralfamadorians, Vonnegut transcends time and controls it, but in contrast, Billy is time's slave.

Vonnegut's attitude toward life is different from Billy's precisely because of the difference in their time travel. Though Vonnegut is sympathetic to the Tralfamadorian idea that everything that will be already is, because all moments are, and always have been, structured that way, he is not indifferent to human atrocity and death, as Billy is. The concept of the structuring of moments gives him a way of accepting things past, but he does not accept them without regret. The frequent references to atrocities throughout the novel are not any less atrocious because they were in some sense inevitable. The assertion that everything is a result of the structuring of certain moments is certainly true when looking back; no one can change the structure of moments past. And whether or not the future is already structured makes little difference when one does not know the structure; consequently, for Vonnegut it is impossible to feel absolute futility about the future, as Billy does.

But it is primarily through the contrast in attitudes toward death that Vonnegut distinguishes himself from Billy, and fully delimits his own Tralfamadorian view. For Billy and the Tralfamadorians, death is not serious or regretable since it is only experienced for a while, and then one "swings back into life." Though Vonnegut does not maintain that this

version of the experience of death is impossible, he views death as serious and final. Nevertheless Vonnegut, too must reply to death with "so it goes." But the emotions behind his use of the phrase are quite different from the emotions of Billy and the Tralfamadorians when they use it. Billy and the Tralfamadorians are truly indifferent, but Vonnegut says "so it goes" only to acknowledge the inevitability of death and that he must therefore painfully accept it. His discussion of how and why the subtitle for the novel was chosen proved he is not complacent about human atrocity and death. When Vonnegut replies "so it goes" to the deaths of Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther Kind, men in Vietnam, and his own father, he is far from indifferent, but does realize his helplessness in preventing such deaths.

But Vonnegut also repeatedly used the phrase "so it goes" to show Billy's absolute indifference to death, and to divorce himself from that lack of reaction to it. One of the best examples of Vonnegut's poignant demonstration of Billy's lack of feeling is when Billy remembers what a Tralfamadorian experience of death it had been when he was on maneuvers and declared dead by an umpire, while he was eating lunch at the same time (p. 27). But immediately following this memory Vonnegut tells us that Billy was given an emergency furlough to go home because his father had been killed in a hunting accident. In Vonnegut's saying "so it

goes" he is clearly showing that Billy has very little feelings, and that to "simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is 'so it goes,'" without regret or emotion, is an unacceptable human response. The same statement about Billy is implied when Vonnegut says "so it goes" to the deaths of a bottle of champagne, a glass of water, and the novel, for these metaphorical deaths are treated with the same gravity as Billy treats real death. Although Vonnegut jokes with these metaphorical deaths: unlike Billy, he clearly sees the difference between them and real death, and accepts real death bitterly and only reluctantly. Billy's indifference to real death and Vonnegut's anger with that indifference is also repeatedly shown each time "so it goes" is uttered in response to the war and the Dresden raid.

Through the contrast with Billy Pilgrim and by writing a close approximation of a Tralfamadorean novel, Vonnegut states the meaning of his novel in terms of his own response to atrocity and death. The climax of the novel is Vonnegut's reply, "so it goes," to the deaths of Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, soldiers in Vietnam, and his father. Here he shows how he painfully and bitterly must accept both natural and needless death. But in stating the climax in terms of himself, and in accepting, with limitations, the values of Tralfamadore, he is making certain statements about art too.

The novel within the novel, the story of Billy Pilgrim and Tralfamadore, is a contrivance to clearly delimit and define the strictly personal feelings of the autobiographical chapters. As in Breakfast of Champions, one of the reasons for writing seems to be to rid himself of obsessions, as he had been trying to write his"Dresden book" since the end of World War Two. But Slaughterhouse Five affirms more than just the value of personal expression. In attempting to write a Tralfamadorian novel, Vonnegut, like the Tralfamadorians, is affirming the value of art, even in an absurd world. Not only can the writer create beauty, which is given value in itself by the Tralfamadorians, and by implication by Vonnegut, but he can also help man understand and accept his world. Even if Vonnegut cannot prevent atrocity, he can play an important role as an artist.

Although none of the novels earlier than Slaughterhouse Five are as clearly solipsistic as his last two, there are certainly tendencies in that direction. He seems to feel that his general themes should be applicable to himself as well as to his characters, and therefore, he makes his presence implicit. In several instances there are obvious parallels between himself and his characters, other times he will reveal himself in an introduction, and on one occasion uses style, as in Breakfast of Champions, to express a relation between characters and author.

Cat's Cradle is by far the most sophisticated of the earlier novels in applying themes to the author as well as to characters. Established between Vonnegut and Bokonon is certainly the most fully realized parallel between Vonnegut and a character prior to the sustained parallel with Kilgore Trout. The novel certainly has meaning beyond the importance of Vonnegut's presence, but such consideration deepens the novel, and Vonnegut works very hard to explain his role as a writer in the terms of the themes of this book.

The most obvious parallel between Vonnegut and Bokonon is that they are both writers of books that deal with the end of the world. This parallel also extends to John, the narrator of the novel, who tells us of his intention to write a book entitled The Day the World Ended about the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. John's book and Vonnegut's book, frame the Books of Bokonon, which eventually become doomsday books, and the final sentence of Bokonon's books describes the end of the world for all three. And even the "warning" of John's book, or Vonnegut's book, is patterned after that of Bokonon's:

> Bokonon's:
> All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameful lies. (p. 14)
>
> John's or Vonnegut's:
> Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either. (p. 14)

But a much more significant parallel between Vonnegut and Bokonon lies in the fact that the novel puts the creation of religions and the creation of literature in the same camp, opposed to science and its "truth." In the name of truth the scientists in the novel isolate themselves and avoid all of their human responsibilities, but Bokononism, and writing by analogy, work in the opposite direction, using lies to help people feel better about the terrible truth. The sole aim of Bokononism is to make the lives of the materially wretched people of San Lorenzo happier by diverting their attention from their poverty, and in the discussion of the possibility of a general writers' strike it seems that writers, too, make people's lives more bearable. Philip Castle hypothesizes that without writers people would die "like mad dogs,.... snarling and snapping at each other and biting their own tails," and Julian Castle implores his son and John "for the love of God, both of you, please keep writing!" Writing clearly has value in negative terms here; it can prevent utter despair, but the only positively stated value seems to be its power to evoke laughter. Near the end of the novel John's role in the little society remaining in San Lorenzo is to "write books that make us laugh," and as Bokonon implies in his definition of maturity, "a bitter disappointment for which no remedy exists, unless laughter can be said to remedy anything," laughter may be a kind of remedy for

problems. Thus Vonnegut's role as a writer is similar to Bokonon's in making people feel better, and one can extend the analogy by adding "in spite of the truth." But Vonnegut does more than simply and quietly fulfill this role: he carries the analogy further and, like Bokonon, exposes the artificality of the creation which makes people feel better.

Vonnegut seems to respond to what John calls "the cruel paradox of Bokononist thought": "the heartbreaking necessity of lying about reality, and the heartbreaking impossibility of lying about it." (p. 189) as Cat's Cradle works on an analogous paradox: the novel is obviously fiction rather than fact, but instead of making the fiction believable its artificiality is continually exposed.[3] Vonnegut parodies himself by admitting the book is fiction and that he is manipulating it, as he is apparently trying to entertain others and to evoke laughter. He certainly seems to affirm the paradoxical logic behind Bokononism, and uses the same logic to justify writing Cat's Cradle. Ultimately Bokonon can be viewed as a metaphor for Vonnegut, as both use artificial creations (religion and literature) to entertain and console, and both undercut themselves by openly acknowledging the artificiality of their creations.

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3 Peter Reed argues this point as well (pp. 119-145). There are naturally similarities in our arguements and I borrow the general idea from him.

The primary way in which the artificiality of the novel is revealed is through style. As in Breakfast of Champions, style is very important, but here it exposes its artificiality for exactly the opposite purpose than in the later novel. In Breakfast of Champions style is used to penetrate to a concrete reality, but in Cat's Cradle it is used to expose and exalt its artificiality. And there are two basic ways in which style does this in Cat's Cradle: it shows the arbitrariness of what is original: and it illustrates the degree to which literature depends on other artificial sources outside the realm of the particular concerns of its subject matter.

To begin with the first, the most obvious examples of arbitrariness have to be the invented words which from the conceptual base for Bokononism. Karass, wampeter, van-dit, wring-wrang, granfalloon, duprass, and bokomaru have at best only far-fetched connections to any English words, but they do serve to point out the ultimate arbitrariness of the very basis of all language, the words. Vonnegut's use of these terms suggests the question of why one object or action or characteristic is associated with a particular sound and others with other particular sounds. Ultimately there is no reason (except in the case of words that sound like what they mean) and Vonnegut's association of concepts with these words is no more arbitrary than the association of any concept with any word, except that no one else has ever used these terms

before. He certainly makes his point, but he nevertheless continues to play with the artifice of words, delighting in puns, cliched phrases, and the sound of words. The dialects he sometimes uses illustrate this acceptance and over-indulgence in the artificial, as does the soul-sole pun, Crosby's obsession with the word "pissant," and, of course, all the Bokononist terminology.

This joyful indulgence in artifice not only occurs at the level of diction, but also in the division of a 186 page book into 127 chapters. Like many other writers (e.g. Sterne), particularly contemporary ones (e.g. Barthelme), Vonnegut has had tendencies toward the short block of narration, with the tendency becoming more pronounced with time. Sirens of Titan has relatively short units of narration, but more conventional, longer chapter divisions, while Mother Night uses the short unit to form short chapters. But even there he has only 45 chapters in 192 pages, and the chapters seem to quite naturally follow the stylistic tendency in this direction. But in Cat's Cradle he seems to exaggerate and parody this tendency in himself to show the arbitrariness of what he is doing. The Chapter divisions are no longer logical expressions of a style, but are frequently interruptions in the middle of something to emphasize the arbitrary, and make one aware of the artifice of the novel. To illustrate with just one example, Chapter 70, "Tutored by Bokonon,"

begins in the middle of a conversation:

> "I wrote a book once."
> "What was it called?"
> "San Lorenzo," he said, "the Land, the History, and the People.
>
> Tutored by Bokonon 70
>
> "You I take it," I said to the mosaicist, "are Philip Castle, son of Julian Castle."
> "That happiness is mine." (p. 106)

The titles of the chapters are also frequently arbitrary and playful, referring to something insignificant like "O.K., Mom" or "Never Index your own Book."

The joy of acknowledging the artificiality of his novel goes a bit further, for Vonnegut uses an invented literary source to narrate part of the novel. Virtually all of the background information about San Lorenzo is supplied through Philip Castle's San Lorenzo, the Land, the History, and the People. Thus Vonnegut adds another level of artifice to the novel.

But there are still other levels of artifice. Not only does Vonnegut engage in self-parody to illustrate the artificiality of his work, he also makes countless references to real works of literature and elements of contemporary culture. He parodies many of these things to reflect on his own novel, but merely their presence serves to show that the novel is built up from many things other than its immediate subject, thereby reiterating its artificiality.

As Peter Reed suggests,[4] "the 'Call me Jonah' opening smacks of declared artifice," as Vonnegut refers to Moby Dick and an Old Testament story, but makes a joke of his references by adding: My parents did, or nearly did. They called me John. (p. 11) Although the narrator of Moby Dick is sincere and his story to be taken as true, Vonnegut's narrator undercuts his own sincerity and credibility, making a joke, and admitting his name is not even Jonah. In doing this Vonnegut implies there is no serious comparison with Moby Dick, and that the reference is made primarily to expose and parody the dependence of literature on other literature. This and several other examples serve to show that the novel is made up of artifice, and draws its material from literature as well as from life.

The artificiality of Cat's Cradle is apparent from its references to non-literary things as well. The first sight of San Lorenzo shows it "was an amazingly regular rectangle," conspicously like the life-like models Frank made in the hobby shop. One could, of course, consider it Vonnegut's model, as he admits the artificiality of its shape. And his model Caribbean island ruled by a man called "Papa" is obviously based on Haiti, probably the least likely place to encounter the

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4 Peter Reed, p.132.

consequences of scientific development. Even "dynamic tension," the basic principle for satisfying the people of a materially impoverished island, is a parody of the system of isometric exercises for body building, prescribed by Charles Atlas. That the physical is precisely what Bokononism tries to ignore serves to emphasize the ridiculousness of the religion, and of Vonnegut's novel, since as a whole it supports the religion; (but both admit as much and use artifice regardless). In spite of the number of parodies of literature and popular culture in the novel,[5] Vonnegut reveals artifice simply by continually referring to things not directly related to his subject matter.

Although Vonnegut emphasizes his manipulation of something artificial, and implies that in doing so he is like Bokonon, his presence in Cat's Cradle, though strongly felt,

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5 There are several other examples of such parodies in the novel. Among them are Dr. Breed's parody of Dickens' A Christmas Carol when discussing the "girl pool:" "'They serve science, too,' Dr. Breed testified, 'though they may not understand a word of it. God bless them every one!'" (p. 34) Another example is the parody of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" which occurs when boiled albatros is eaten as John prepared to become president of San Lorenzo. (p. 153) Of course, the island is doomed after the killing of the albatros. The sole-soul pun, at the heart of Bokononist ritual is from absurdist drama. Julian Castle's jungle hospital is admitted to be modeled on Dr. Albert Schweitzer's. The cliche "chip off the old block" is used in reference to chips of ice-nine:" . . . Angela and Newton Hoenikker had in their possessions the seeds of ice-nine, seeds grown from their father's seed-chips, in a manner of speaking off the old block." And Bokonon's calypso which goes: "Tiger got to hunt/ Bird got to fly/. . .is based on a popular song of the early sixties.

is only implicit. The book is not defined in terms of him, but clearly focuses on Bokononism and the contrast of it to the view of the scientists. However, Vonnegut sees his role as similar and parallel to that of Bokonon's, and Bokonon's role provides a metaphor for Vonnegut's.

Cat's Cradle is clearly a foreshadowing of the later novels where his presence as author is explicit, but it is not the only one. As early as his second novel, Sirens of Titan, Vonnegut wants to clarify his role as author, defining it in relation to the particular novel at hand, and defining the purpose of his novel for his society. In Cat's Cradle he repeatedly makes the point that everything in the novel is invented and manipulated by him, and implies that the purpose of the novel, extending the parallel with Bokonon further, is to entertain and to pretend to make sense of a chaotic world.[6] (In Breakfast of Champions his aim is opposite, for he wants to accept the chaos of the world and simulate it in literature). In Sirens of Titan Vonnegut adopts a pose in the beginning that would indicate

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[6] Bokonon's calypso, by analogy, also applies to Vonnegut.

> I wanted all things
> To seem to make some sense,
> So we all could be happy, yes,
> Instead of tense.
> And I made up lies
> So that they all fit nice,
> and I made this sad world
> A par-a-dise.

that the remainder of the novel is a myth invented by him to re-orient the attitude of modern society.

The earliest example of Vonnegut creating an identification between himself and one of his characters occurs in Sirens of Titan. One should be careful about drawing out a parallel between Vonnegut and Rumford, but a parallel exists in certain respects. Rumford's manipulation of the life of Malachi Constant is similar in purpose to Vonnegut's manipulation of characters within the novel; both try to change the values of society by substituting new values for old ones. But, of course, the acceptance of "accidents" and manipulation lead to different values for each; Rumford establishes his version of human egalitarianism, and Vonnegut maintains the value of human love. Furthermore, both Rumford and Vonnegut use the creation of a myth to try to influence social attitudes, though again, they create dissimilar myths. Admittedly Rumford has many functions in the novel, but at least in these respects he is a partial metaphor for Vonnegut: the myth maker.

But Vonnegut's presence is even clearer in the first page and a half, where he creates a persona who is supposedly writing the book. This persona lives in the future, after man has learned to look for truth and meaning within himself, and he tells of painful experiences when things are otherwise:

> Everyone now knows how to find the meaning of life within himself.
>
> But mankind wasn't always so lucky. Less than a century ago man and women did not have easy access to the puzzle boxes within them.
>
> They could not name even one of the fifty-three portals to the soul.
>
> Gimcrack religions were big business.
>
> 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, and what all creation was all about.
>
> Mankind flung its advance agents ever outward, ever outward. Eventually it flung them out into space, into the colorless tasteless, weightless sea of outwardness without end.
>
> It flung them like stones.
>
> These unhappy agents found what had already been found in abundance of Earth-a nightmare of meaninglessness without end. The bounties of space, 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.
>
> This was the beginning of goodness and wisdom.
>
> What were people like in olden times, with their souls as yet unexplored?
>
> The following is a true story from the Nightmare Ages, falling roughly, give or take a few years, between the Second World War and the Third Great Depression. (pp. 7-8)

By taking this pose Vonnegut is advocating this position of looking inward, and suggesting the futility of looking outward. He certainly implies that this is a simple truth mankind should have recognized, but since it has not, Vonnegut is going to write a novel illustrating the futility of present attitudes. Like Rumford he creates a myth, but Vonnegut's myth manipulates Rumford's for its own purposes. Rumford uses the contrast of Malachi Constant, financier and Unk,

The Space Wanderer, to show the arbitrariness of the Universe, but Vonnegut uses the contrast of both of these roles with the role of Malachi Constant on Titan to illustrate the futility of the external and the value of the internal.

Looking outward yields no meaning for the lives of Malachi Constant, Bee Rumford, and Winston Niles Rumford, instead suggesting "meaninglessness without end." All find only that they have been "used," and the final outwardness in the novel reveals merely the Tralfamadorians sending their banal message, "greetings," across the universe. Only when Constant and Bee have completed their outward quests, and are sent to Titan, both bitter and no closer to fulfillment for all their difficulties, do they begin their profitable look inward. The affirmation of human love they make on Titan (which includes the willingness to be used) completes the parable of the "Nightmare Age" Vonnegut intends to write, maintaining the values established in the first page and a half of the novel.

Although the myth is largely a reiteration of the values established by future inward looking mankind, it is certainly necessary in order to validate that position. The pose Vonnegut adopts as author of this "true story" is obviously an artificial one, and the mere adoption of it does not convince us of its values; the myth is necessary for that, especially

because of the artificiality of the pose. The purpose of standing apart from his fiction is two-fold: first, Vonnegut maintains that the myth is a more powerful expression of values than simple declaration or explanation;[7] and second, he is admitting that he is creating a myth that he feels necessary and relevant to the actual world. The presence of the introductory pose serves to emphasize the relation of the myth to some real world, and expresses the need for Vonnegut as author to create relevant myths. This clearly points to the importance of a writer's projection of "good" ideas in Breakfast of Champions, and the concern with his role expressed in several of his other novels.

Sirens of Titan, Cat's Cradle, and Mother Night do not focus directly on Vonnegut as author as Slaughterhouse Five and Breakfast of Champions do, but they do show that Vonnegut's interest is defining his role as author begins quite early in his career. In these earlier works he certainly reveals that there is an author writing a fiction, and in Sirens of Titan and Cat's Cradle he defines the purpose of the fiction for his society. But it is not until Slaughterhouse Five that this author is made a very specific and

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7 Since his myth is only an invented fiction, he seems to imply that not only myth, but fiction, is a more powerful form of communication than straightforward explanation.

real person; earlier he seems content to remain more generalized.[8]

However, there is another way in which Vonnegut reveals his personality, but this too, is an element of his later novels.

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, Slaughterhouse Five, and Breakfast of Champions, all concern the science-fiction writer, Kilgore Trout. Trout is possibly some kind of metaphor for Vonnegut, but the parallel is never really clearly defined. However, at times Trout's voice is certainly that of Vonnegut's, as Trout is frequently used in thematically important ways. Most of the plot summaries of Trout's novels and stories provide parables by which Vonnegut can make or reiterate a point of his own. As mentioned much earlier, in Breakfast of Champions Trout's Nobel Prize acceptance speech discussion of the obsessions with gold and little girls' underpants concluded Vonnegut's discussion of the same things. Similarly, Trout's story "This Means You" is a parable of the absurdity of property rights, with which Vonnegut is so obsessed throughout his novel. In Trout's story the forty or so people who own all of the land on Hawaiian Islands all put up "No Trespassing" signs, leaving those who own no property no place to go. And showing Vonnegut's disgust with the American government,

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8 Though it is still conceivable that he is projecting personae in his last two novels, in spite of the high degree of apparent personalization.

everyone who owns no property is equipped with a helium balbon so that they do not have to occupy other people's property. Also in Breakfast of Champions is Trout's How You Doin'? which illustrates the importance of good or bad ideas. An advertising agency on another planet continually referred to national averages in their advertising for Shazzbutter, the equivalent of Earthling peanut butter. Earth wished to conquer other planets, and realizing the pride of the Shazzbutter-eaters, decided to infiltrate the ad agency and make all the averages so high that the people would all feel inferior and be easy to conquer. Obviously, the Earthlings poisioned their minds wi[redacted]d ideas.

In Slaughterhouse-Five the plot summaries of [redacted]t's novels play a similar thematic role. But in this book they do more to develop an idea than to reiterate one Vonnegut has already made, although there is some of this too. (Trout's novel, The Gutless Wonder, about a robot who had halitosis and who had killed people by dropping burning jellied gasoline on them, and was then accepted as a human being when the halitosis was cured, is a clear reference to Vonnegut's point that human atrocity has been too easily ignored.) The view about Christ expressed in two of Trout's novels provide the novel's most effective connections of Billy with Christ. In The Gospel from Outer Space a visitor from outer space

tries to determine how Christians on Earth "found it so easy to be cruel: he decides that though the Gospels meant to teach people 'to be merciful, even to the lowest of the low,' they actually taught 'before you kill somebody, make absolutely sure he isn't well connected.'" Finding this quite unsatisfactory he invents a new gospel in which Christ is a trouble-making bum, who is adopted as God's son only as he is dying. The moral is then: "From this moment on, He will punish horribly anybody who torments a bum who has no connections!" In another Trout novel a time-traveler sees Jesus and his father build a cross on which a rabble-rouser is to be executed, and "they were glad to have the work." Billy Pilgrim is certainly a Christ figure in these terms; like the new version of Jesus, he is murdered without sufficient cause, but has no special claim to salvation; and he is like the Christ who builds a cross and thus contributes to human atrocity through his indifference and unwillingness to always make a strong moral stand. Though Vonnegut certainly does not want the parallel taken too far, through Trout's novels he shows Billy is Christ-like in being a scapegoat and a pawn of larger forces.

Though Trout brings up the question of considering Billy in terms of Christ, he also suggests an opposing figure in human history, Charles Darwin. After Vonnegut

says that Christ is not of much interest to Tralfamadore, and that Darwin is, because he maintained that those who die are to die, he mentions that the same idea also appears in Trout's The Big Board. So in Trout's science fiction there is the same polarity that forms the parameters of Vonnegut's reaction to Dresden; on one hand it must be considered terrible (Christianity is a metaphor for this), and on the other hand it must be viewed as necessary (as Darwin views death).[9] So Vonnegut used Trout's writing to supply, or to add, a new terminology for the basic problem with which the novel is concerned; and Trout therefore supplies a second voice, a science fictionalized one, for Vonnegut.

Similarly, Trout's voice is clearly that of Vonnegut near the end of God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater. There the value and importance of Eliot's efforts in Rosewater County are fully and simply stated by Trout:

> "It was quite possibly the most important social experiment of our time, for it dealt on a very small scale with a problem whose queasy horrors will eventually be made world-wide by the sophistication of machines. The problem is this: How to love people who have no use?
> In time, almost all men and women will become worthless as producers of goods, food, services, and more machines, as sources of practical ideas in the areas of economics, engineering, and probably medicine, too. So-if we can't find reasons and methods for treasuring human beings because they are human beings, then we might as well, as has so often been suggested, rub them out." (p.183)

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[9] Vonnegut accepts both views at least partially. Though he seems to view only natural death as necessary, he seems to admit that death is at least inevitable.

> "...the main lesson Eliot learned is that people can use all the uncritical love they can get."
> ...
> "It's news that a man was able to give that kind of love over a long period of time. If one man can do it, perhaps others can do it, too. It means that our hatred of useless human beings and the cruelties we inflict upon them for their own good need not be parts of human nature. Thanks to the example of Eliot Rosewater, millions upon millions of people may learn to love and help whomever they see." (pp. 186-7)

And it is also Trout that fully explains the image of the fireman, which Eliot and Vonnegut hold so dear:

> "Your devotion to volunteer fire departments is very sane, too, Eliot, for they are, when the alarm goes off, almost the only examples of enthusiastic unselfishness to be seen in this land. They rush to the rescue of any human being, and count not the cost. The most contemptible man in town, should his contemptible house catch fire, will see his enemies put the fire out. And, as he pokes through the ashes for remains of his contemptible possessions, he will be comforted and pitied by no less than the Fire Chief." (p. 184)

In spite of all of these examples, and all of the other examples where Trout's plots provide parables about the wrongheadedness of contemporary society, no simple equation such as Vonnegut equals Trout is possible. One can only hypothesize about the degree to which Vonnegut thinks Trout is a representation of him, but there are a number of possible similarities. Trout's work is generally considered trash (until after his meeting with Dwayne Hoover in Breakfast of Champions), as all of his books are sold in pornography shops, and often accompanied by pornographic

photographs. Through all three of the last novels he really has only one fan, Eliot Rosewater, and even he in Slaughterhouse Five maintains that Trout can not write; only his ideas are good (p. 94). By analogy, Vonnegut may be suggesting that he, too is a poor stylist, and that he could be associated with pornographers is this respect. Or perhaps he is making reference to the science fiction elements of his own work, and considering them trashy. In his preface to Welcome to the Monkey House he certainly has reservations about himself as a "slick fiction" writer. He is not willing to say that a writer of slick fiction is any better than a public relations man, but on the other hand does not take seriously a college professor who tells him that science fiction is the lowest form of fiction. Hence the identification with Trout seems only partial. The same conclusion is supported when he considers himself as both a novelist and short story writer in sarcasticly presenting a collection of short works, Welcome to the Monkey House:

> The contents of this book are samples of work I sold in order to finance the writing of the novels. Here one finds the fruits of Free Enterprise. (p. X)

Yet he seems to think more highly of the elements of science fiction in his novels, as God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater is the product of Eliot's serious suggestion that someone should

write a science fiction novel about money:

> "Just think of the wild ways money is passed around on Earth!" he said. "You don't have to go to the Planet Tralfamadore in Anti-Matter Galaxy 508 G to find weird creatures with unbelievable powers. Look at the powers of an Earthling millionaire! Look at me! I was born naked, just like you, but my God, friends and neighbors, I have thousands of dollars a day to spend!" (p. 21)

By maintaining, in the opening sentence of the book, that a sum of money is his main character, Vonnegut is doing just that. One can hypothesize in several more tenous directions too, such as: that Vonnegut feels that the simplicity and readability of his style separates his work from "high literature";[10] that when he really begins to write science fiction his writing gets much worse; or that straight science fiction tends to be trash and his writing only has quality in what he adds to science fiction. But there are other more concrete and plausable similarities with Trout.

In portraying Trout as the artist who has failed in Breakfast of Champions, Vonnegut is probably projecting some of the difficulties of his own career until he became well known and popular. Like Trout he was unable to make a living doing exactly what he wanted: to write novels. His career as a short fiction or slick fiction writer seems parallel to Trout's as a stamp redeemer (Slaughterhouse-Five)

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10 The term is from Leslie Fiedler, "The Divine Stupidity of Kurt Vonnegut," Esquire (Sept. 1970), pp. 195-204

or as an aluminum window installer (Breakfast of Champions). But a parallel between their early careers (as Trout becomes well known and popular, too) might also extend to the references to pornography; Vonnegut seems to consider his earlier work of little artistic or social value, and perhaps equates it with the appearance of Trout's early works in pornography shops. Additionally, Trout's characteristic of never saving manuscripts or even enclosing self addressed envelopes for their return is perhaps a manifestation of Vonnegut's comment in the Preface of Breakfast of Champions to the effect that he always feels "lousy" about his books.

There is another possible similarity that lies in Trout's bitterness. In all of the novels in which he appears there is reference to his bitterness. Though Vonnegut shows some bitterness in Breakfast of Champions and Slaughterhouse Five, all of his novels express a more complex view of life than Trout's simple bitterness would imply. "Harrison Bergeron," "All the King's Horses," and "Welcome to the Monkey House" are all good examples of shorter works where bitterness, sarcasm, and cynicism, characteristic of Trout, are quite evident; and the last is directly based on Trout's 2BR02B in God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater.

Even if all of these parallels with Trout must remain hypothetical, to a greater or lesser degree, it certainly does seem clear that with Trout, Vonnegut is searching for yet another way to make reference to himself. The pattern of growing and solipsistic interest in creating metaphors for, and making statements about, himself as a writer, seems clear. In some of the earlier novels he indicates the presence of an author, but he does not personalize this figure. As his interest in presenting a personalized author figure begins to develop he introduces Kilgore Trout as a character, and increases the space devoted to him with each successive novel.

Vonnegut's interest in establishing his presence begins as early as his second novel, Sirens of Titan, (and even the first, Player Piano is somewhat autobiographical) and seems to continually grow. After creating clear and fairly elaborate metaphors for himself in Mother Night and Cat's Cradle, his making his presence explicit in Slaughterhouse Five seems to be a logical extention of his consideration of writing, and of himself as a writer. And given the pattern of re-using and elaborating ideas and metaphors, which he acknowledges in his Preface to Breakfast of Champions, it seems quite natural for Vonnegut to finally write a novel like Breakfast of Champions, in which explicit statements

about art, the artist, and himself as an artist become the central focus.

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