Trauma and Literature
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Lecture - 54
Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five - Part 5

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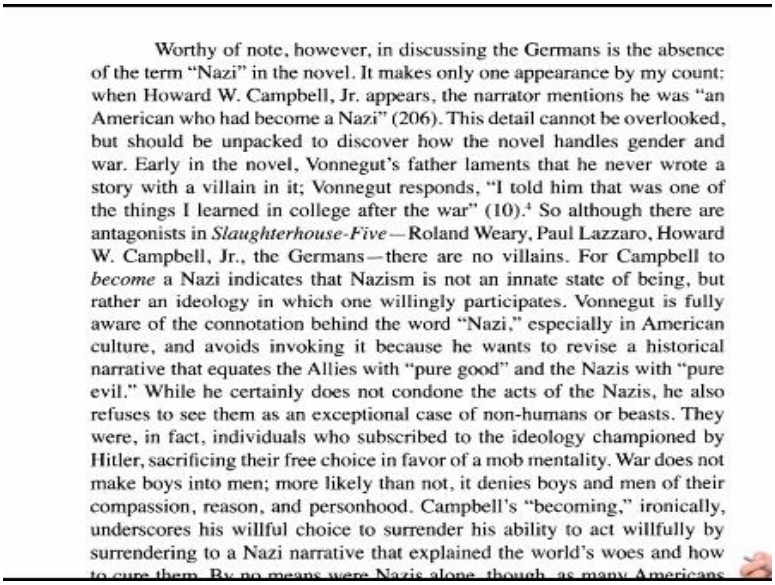
Worthy of note, however, in discussing the Germans is the absence of the term "Nazi" in the novel. It makes only one appearance by my count: when Howard W. Campbell, Jr. appears, the narrator mentions he was "an American who had become a Nazi" (206). This detail cannot be overlooked, but should be unpacked to discover how the novel handles gender and war. Early in the novel, Vonnegut's father laments that he never wrote a story with a villain in it; Vonnegut responds, "I told him that was one of the things I learned in college after the war" (10).[4] So although there are antagonists in *Slaughterhouse-Five*—Roland Weary, Paul Lazzaro, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., the Germans—there are no villains. For Campbell to *become* a Nazi indicates that Nazism is not an innate state of being, but rather an ideology in which one willingly participates. Vonnegut is fully aware of the connotation behind the word "Nazi," especially in American culture, and avoids invoking it because he wants to revise a historical narrative that equates the Allies with "pure good" and the Nazis with "pure evil." While he certainly does not condone the acts of the Nazis, he also refuses to see them as an exceptional case of non-humans or beasts. They were, in fact, individuals who subscribed to the ideology championed by Hitler, sacrificing their free choice in favor of a mob mentality. War does not make boys into men; more likely than not, it denies boys and men of their compassion, reason, and personhood. Campbell's "becoming," ironically, underscores his willful choice to surrender his ability to act willfully by surrendering to a Nazi narrative that explained the world's woes and how to cure them. By no means were Nazis alone, though, as many Americans

This is an NPTEL course titled "Trauma and Literature" where we have the final session on Kurt Vonnegut's novel "Slaughterhouse-Five". The idea of military masculinity and how that is critiqued by Vonnegut is talked here.

The representation of "Trauma and Literature" in this novel, "Slaughterhouse-Five", is very complex condition, which includes agency, absence of agency, compulsory performance of masculinity. The moment of hesitation or ambivalence is seen as a criminal activity and penalize sometimes with sometimes with death penalty.

There is a sense of being a reluctant soldier. It is in a way ironically undercuts the subtitle of the novel which is an illusion to Christian Knights, the young boys who go out to fight battles for the Christian kingdom, which actually ends up being a duty dance with death, which is also part of the subtitle.

The dance macabre quality, that duty dance with death is constantly mentioned in the novel. We will talk about the ambivalence in this novel in terms of how it moves

away from a binaristic understanding of good or evil. The Germans are not the evil people in this war.

The Americans are not all the good people in the war. The axis allied forces division is sort of blurred because and Vonnegut gives you a very, it is an insider's depiction of war where there is no winner, there is no hero, there is no villain. The absence of the villain is something which is foregrounded in the story, in the character of Vonnegut's father for instance, who tells him why there are no villains in the story.

It is because of Vonnegut's own experience in a war teaches them at a very experiential level, at a very almost visceral level, that there is no villain in the war in the same way as there is no hero in the war. So, everyone dies, everyone suffers. Everyone perpetrates, everyone is complicit in violence.

He talks about the absence of the word Nazi, in representations of Germans in this novel. Ironically, the only time the word Nazi appears is when he is talking about an American character. It makes this concept of Nazism very complex in quality.

It is not as if he is painting all German's in the same brush of Nazism and evil and you National Socialist evil. And it is not likewise he is not painting all Americans as liberators. It is just more complicated than that. However, discussing the Germans is the absence of the term Nazi in the novel.

It makes only one appearance by my count, when Howard W. Campbell Jr. appears, the narrator mentions he was an American who had become a Nazi. This detail cannot be overlooked, but should be unpacked to uncover to discover how the novel handles gender and war. Early in the novel Vonnegut's father laments that he never wrote a story with a villain in it.

"Vonnegut responds I told him that that was one of the things I learned in college after the war." Although there are antagonists in Slaughterhouse-Five, Roland Weary, Paul Lazzaro, Howard W. Campbell Jr., the Germans there are no villains. For Campbell to become a Nazi indicates that Nazism is not an innate state of being, but rather an ideology in which one willingly participates.

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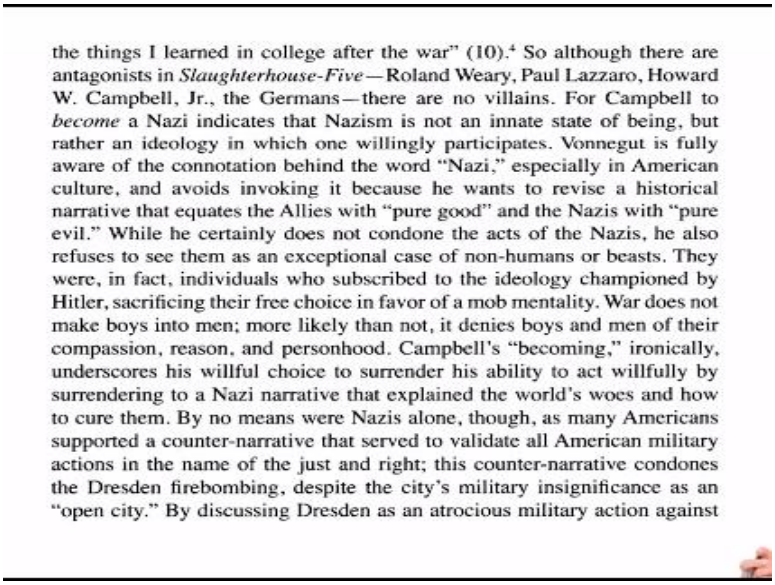

the things I learned in college after the war" (10).[4] So although there are antagonists in *Slaughterhouse-Five*—Roland Weary, Paul Lazzaro, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., the Germans—there are no villains. For Campbell to *become* a Nazi indicates that Nazism is not an innate state of being, but rather an ideology in which one willingly participates. Vonnegut is fully aware of the connotation behind the word "Nazi," especially in American culture, and avoids invoking it because he wants to revise a historical narrative that equates the Allies with "pure good" and the Nazis with "pure evil." While he certainly does not condone the acts of the Nazis, he also refuses to see them as an exceptional case of non-humans or beasts. They were, in fact, individuals who subscribed to the ideology championed by Hitler, sacrificing their free choice in favor of a mob mentality. War does not make boys into men; more likely than not, it denies boys and men of their compassion, reason, and personhood. Campbell's "becoming," ironically, underscores his willful choice to surrender his ability to act willfully by surrendering to a Nazi narrative that explained the world's woes and how to cure them. By no means were Nazis alone, though, as many Americans supported a counter-narrative that served to validate all American military actions in the name of the just and right; this counter-narrative condones the Dresden firebombing, despite the city's military insignificance as an "open city." By discussing Dresden as an atrocious military action against

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They were in fact individuals who subscribed to the ideology championed by Hitler, sacrificing their free choice in favor of a mob mentality. War does not make boys into men more likely than not. It denies boys and men of their compassion reason and personhood. Campbell's becoming ironically underscores this willful choice to surrender his ability to act willfully by surrendering to a Nazi narrative that explained the world's woes and how to kill them.

By no means were Nazis alone although as many Americans supported a counter-narrative that served to validate all American military actions in the name of the just and the right. This counter narrative condones the Dresden firebombing, despite the city's military insignificance as an open city.

It is a very significant message in terms of the philosophical framework that Vonnegut is using as espousing in terms of the philosophical framework that we are using to read "Trauma and Literature". There is that ambivalent grayness about good

and evil. We can see that there is not an axis of evil or an axis of good that Vonnegut is ascribing to.

He talks about how the trauma the real trauma of war is a disintegration of personality, a disintegration of subjectivity, a disintegration of the subject position where the subject in subscribing to larger ideology just denies himself, the availability of agency, the availability of free will, the availability of choice, that all disappears. It is the biggest causality in the war.

The fact that the subject has become subscribers to ideology, and that subscription to ideology is by no means limited to Germans alone. It also spills over into all kinds of settings. In this particular context, we find that the event that Vonnegut has chosen to depict and represent over and over again. It is not the event in or stress. It is not the event of the concentration camp.

It is rather the event of the allied bombing of Dresden, which is actually not really a strategically significant city. It was just bombed away and decimated as in just a military decision without any thought about the morality of it or the even the strategy of it, even the ethicality of it. The position of acting out a will, acting out a command, acting out an order, without any hesitation, without any ambivalence, without any availability of choice is the biggest trauma of war, is the biggest causality of war.

These are boys who did not become men, these are boys who became damaged people. These are boys who became paralyzed. These are boys who became unable to carry out the will, unable to carry out their actions, unable to carry out their free thought. The disappearance of free thought is the biggest loss in the time of war, is the biggest causality in the time of war.

And that is something which is repeatedly mentioned and subscribed to by Vonnegut, especially in this section.

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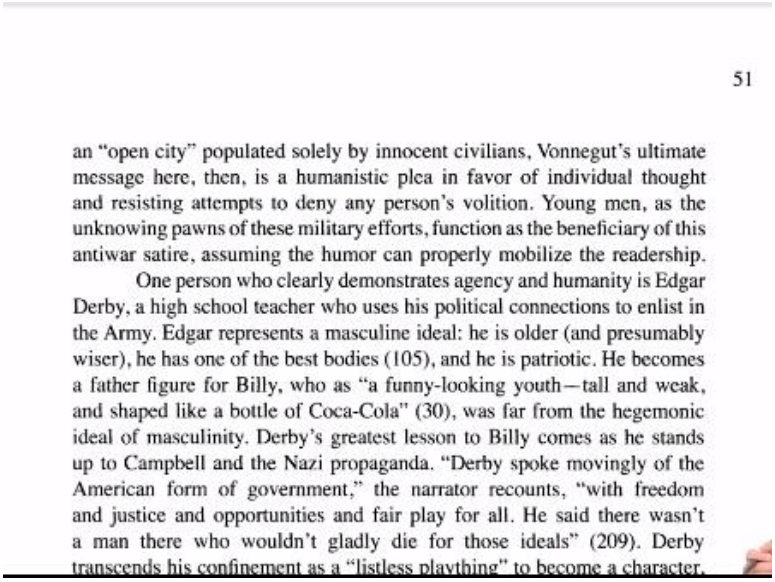

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an "open city" populated solely by innocent civilians, Vonnegut's ultimate message here, then, is a humanistic plea in favor of individual thought and resisting attempts to deny any person's volition. Young men, as the unknowing pawns of these military efforts, function as the beneficiary of this antiwar satire, assuming the humor can properly mobilize the readership.

One person who clearly demonstrates agency and humanity is Edgar Derby, a high school teacher who uses his political connections to enlist in the Army. Edgar represents a masculine ideal: he is older (and presumably wiser), he has one of the best bodies (105), and he is patriotic. He becomes a father figure for Billy, who as "a funny-looking youth—tall and weak, and shaped like a bottle of Coca-Cola" (30), was far from the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. Derby's greatest lesson to Billy comes as he stands up to Campbell and the Nazi propaganda. "Derby spoke movingly of the American form of government," the narrator recounts, "with freedom and justice and opportunities and fair play for all. He said there wasn't a man there who wouldn't gladly die for those ideals" (209). Derby transcends his confinement as a "listless plaything" to become a character.

So, by discussing Dresden as an atrocious military action against an open city populated solely by innocent civilians, Vonnegut's ultimate message here then is the humanistic plea in favor of individual thought and resisting attempts to deny any person's volition. So, volition becomes a causality, volition becomes tragedy over here because the volition goes away.

The bombing of Dresden in a way is interesting, and that the fact that Vonnegut is foregrounding that and highlighting that, rather than the more common concentration camp image is, it is quite radical in a certain sense. But what it also does is it shows us there are now there are no good forces, there are no liberatory forces in a war.

Every force is evil, every force enacts violence of the most horrendous and gruesome orders. And also meaningless orders. Dresden bombing was meaningless in a certain sense. It was a city of civilians. It was an open city, it was not a whole state city. It was not really a city, which was militarily strategic. So that just becomes an act of whimsical, irrational violence.

So young men, as the unknowing pawns of this military efforts function as a beneficiary of this anti-war satire assuming that humor can properly mobilize the readership. So, as mentioned the humor in "Slaughterhouse-Five" as in "Catch-22" it can mobilize readership, it can move the reader, not into happiness by the way, but into some kind of a sympathy for a cause.

It is just lost right for a cause, which is so nihilistic for a cause which is so violent in quality. That sympathy that readers can experience in looking at this humor and experiencing this humor is exactly part of the dark humor quality in this novels in "Catch-22" as well as here.

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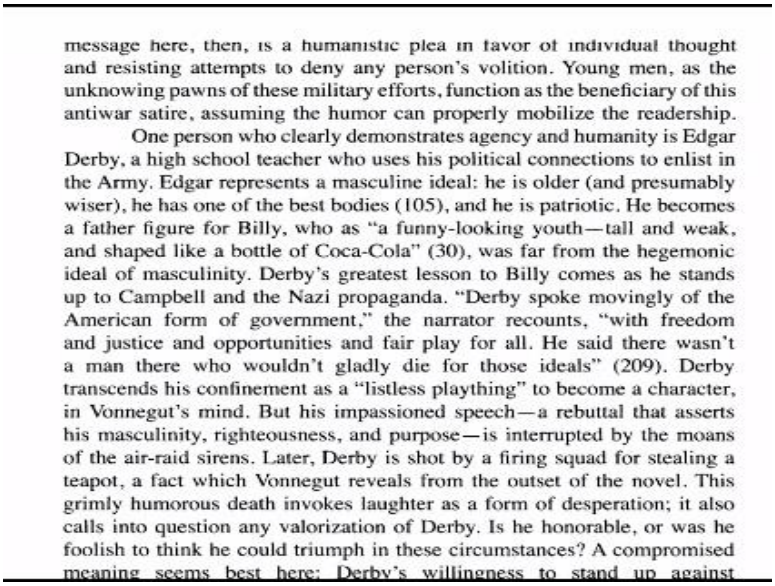

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There are instances in the novel where, there is this whimsicality as foreground. So, for instance the character of Edgar Derby is mentioned here. Edgar Derby's appearance and disappearance, they both out of irrational act.

We are told that Edgar Derby is some kind of a father figure to believe, who as a funny looking youth tall and weak and shaped like a bottle of Coca Cola was far from the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. The masculinity of Derby as well as Billy are represented through some very mundane commercial consumer's metaphors.

They look like a bottle of Coca Cola, which is hardly the image of hegemonic military, strong masculinity. It is not it has got nothing to do with this white masculine valor, that the Christian knightly setting or knightly image would seek to portray.

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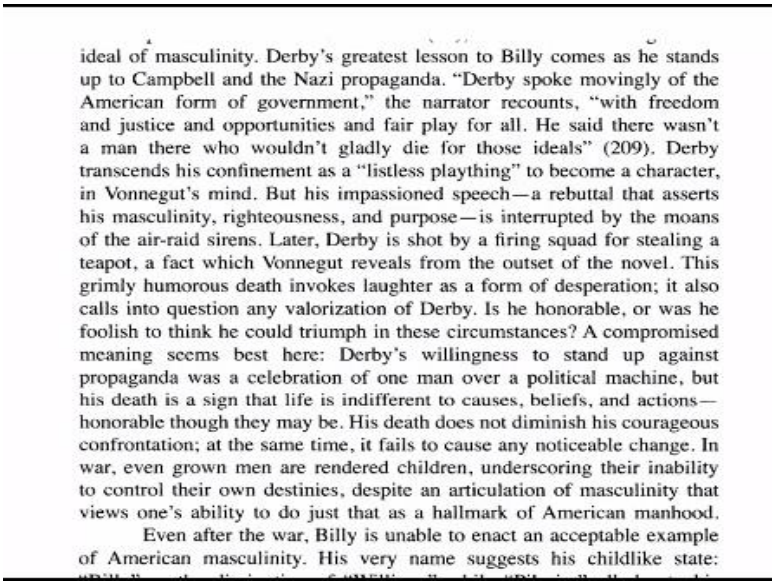

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Even after the war, Billy is unable to enact an acceptable example of American masculinity. His very name suggests his childlike state:

We are told that later Derby is shot by a firing squad for stealing a teapot. A fact which Vonnegut reveals from the outset of the novel. In the opening of the novel, he mentioned some people got shot and killed for stealing the wrong teapot, for stealing a teapot, which was not theirs. This hardly qualifies as military action.

This hardly qualifies as an act of war. But what it shows is, this is the greatest evil of war, that it just makes everything so irrational. It just makes everything so whimsical, so random. People can just survive, get killed, and regenerate themselves by pure accident. The war what it does, it really accentuates the accidentality of our existence, the accidentality of our survival on this planet.

In a wartime situation that just accelerates, that just that awareness, that knowledge of accidentality is very strong, and so in the face, that one just have to become cynical after that. This is cynicism, which extends into dark humor, which extends to the dark comedy and to gray comedy as this article mentions, which is how it gets manifested in a novel like "Slaughterhouse-Five".

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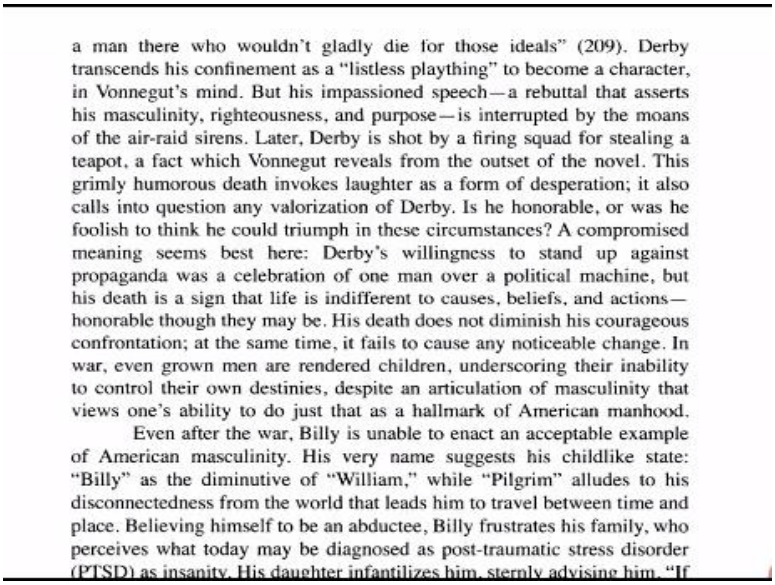

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Even after the war, Billy is unable to enact an acceptable example of American masculinity. His very name suggests his childlike state: "Billy" as the diminutive of "William," while "Pilgrim" alludes to his disconnectedness from the world that leads him to travel between time and place. Believing himself to be an abductee, Billy frustrates his family, who perceives what today may be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as insanity. His daughter infantilizes him, sternly advising him, "If

Derby's death does not diminish his courageous confrontation. At the same time, it fails to cause any noticeable change. It completely undercuts any idea of martyrdom, any heroism or any glamour, or any intensity invested to martyrdom, because nothing will change, someone can just get killed for stealing a teapot which is not theirs.

The process just die a very tragic, almost pathetic death and nothing will change, everything will just go on forever. In war, even grown men are rendered children, underscoring the inability to control their own destinies, despite an articulation of masculinity that views one's ability to do just that as a hallmark of American manhood.

This is the classic and complete statement in this essay, which promotes how this novel rather than depicting how boys become men in a war time, it actually depicts how men become infantilized during a war, where how men become unable to carry out their own will or men become completely unable or challenge in terms of carrying out what they want to do.

This absence of agency is exactly what infantilizes them. So and something which we see to a certain extent in Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly". It is to remember how the boss in the story gets infantilized in the end, because he is unable to carry out, he is unable to remember what he wants to remember. His is the greatest causality of war, this infantilization.

So rather than, far from promoting boys into men, far from this transition from boyhood to manhood, which is part of the popular discourse around war, the reality of war, just infantilizes men. It emasculates men and makes them paralyzed at a mental psychological level. It makes them damaged at a very permanent level.

So and that is something which we see that lingering, that residue presence of that damage is there. Even after the war, Billy is unable to enact an acceptable example of American masculinity. His very name suggests his childlike state. Billy, as the diminutive of William. It is like shrinking of something, as William becomes Billy. So it just strings into a smaller thing.

It is symbolic of the infantilization that he has. He just becomes the boy from a man. He becomes some kind of a helpless, vulnerable boy rather than military hero. While Pilgrim alludes to his disconnectedness from the world that leads them to travel between time and place. So far from being a Christian metaphor, far from being a metaphor of knightly quest, Pilgrim just denotes disconnectedness.

Pilgrim denotes some kind of alienation. He is just wandering away, listlessly. He is wandering away aimlessly and that is the Pilgrim metaphor in question here. Believing himself to be an abductee, Billy frustrates his family, who perceives what today might be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD.

Now mind you, as I mentioned that this term, this classification PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder only came into being during the Vietnam War. So it was not really around when Billy was fighting the Second World War. It had a very different kind of name. Soldiers were seen as hysteric. Soldiers who suffered nervous conditions were seen as hysterics, were criminalized, and were court martialed as we can see from example of Eisenhower.

And they were generally mocked at, they were generally jeered at, they were generally looked down upon. So and the nervous soldier, the reluctant soldier was seen as someone who is insufficiently masculine, is insufficiently heroic quality. I mean, it is a very unheroic quality, a very inglorious quality.

But by the time we came to the Vietnam War, it was so rampant that they had to find out a medical cause and medical name for a medical classification for it, which was post-traumatic stress disorder. His daughter infantilizes him, sternly advising him if you are going to act like a child, maybe we will just have to treat you like a child.

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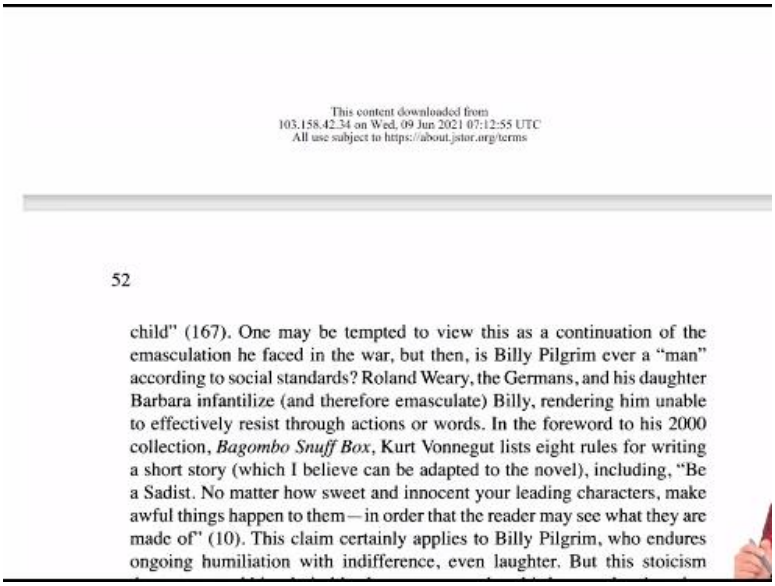

child" (167). One may be tempted to view this as a continuation of the emasculation he faced in the war, but then, is Billy Pilgrim ever a "man" according to social standards? Roland Weary, the Germans, and his daughter Barbara infantilize (and therefore emasculate) Billy, rendering him unable to effectively resist through actions or words. In the foreword to his 2000 collection, *Bagombo Snuff Box*, Kurt Vonnegut lists eight rules for writing a short story (which I believe can be adapted to the novel), including, "Be a Sadist. No matter how sweet and innocent your leading characters, make awful things happen to them—in order that the reader may see what they are made of" (10). This claim certainly applies to Billy Pilgrim, who endures ongoing humiliation with indifference, even laughter. But this stoicism

We can see it is connected to Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly". Even in that short story you find how the woman, they have more agency compared to men, they have more control over the men. They allow the man to leave the house, or they forbid men to leave the house, etc. There is a quality of some kind of gender reversal of social behavior, which came after the war.

And with Mansfield, it was the First World War, here it is the Second World War. But here too we have the daughter of Billy, scolding him for acting like a child and telling him "if we continue to act like a child, we will just treat you like a child, we will lock you up. This is the idea of infantilization. Emasculation that takes place during the war."

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understanding Vonnegut's play with the Blakean binary of innocence and experience. The "experience" of war does not make one mature; it does not allow one to "leave" a state of innocence. Rather, it traumatizes, brutalizes, and kills innocents. As a result, the readers must work to protect innocents like Billy Pilgrim and the thousands of boys like him from the danger of war. War might not be avoidable, but should it be the most innocent who fight it?

Billy Pilgrim knows when he will die. And he does not worry about it, because as he understands it, he will only be dead in that moment. The Tralfamadorians become demagogues of sorts; he yields to their philosophy and pledges allegiance to the notion that free will is an Earthling illusion. "Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim," they attest, "trapped in the amber of the moment. There is no *why*" (97). Consequently Billy allows himself to be tossed about, because there is no alternative in his mind. He admires Adam and Eve, because they were "naked . . . so innocent, so vulnerable, so eager to behave decently" (68); in them, he sees the *desire* to be good and yet their failure to do so, a failure that, from a Tralfamadorian perspective, was fated and therefore inevitable. Billy aligns himself with this inability to act; by treating Billy as a comic butt, Vonnegut encourages the reader to resist such a passive

Rather than glorification of military masculinity, it just shows one the tragedy of agencylessness, the tragedy of not having ownership on one's own body, ownership on one's own decision, ownership on one's own emotional state. Billy pilgrim knows when he will die and he does not worry about it because as he understands that he will only be dead in that moment.

The Tralfamadorians became a demagogues of sort because this is a different planet in which he is inhabiting. He yields to the philosophy and pledges allegiance to the notion that free will is an Earthling illusion. It is just an illusion of free will. But in that other planet of Tralfamadore, free will does not exist. So he just subscribes to that.

Well, here we are Mr. Pilgrim they attest, trapped in the amber of the moment. There is no why. There is no why, we are just trapped in our, existence and there is that acceptance of absurdity and acknowledgement of randomness and acknowledgement of accidentality, which is there. There is no free will, there is no illusion of free will. Consequently, Billy allows himself to be tossed about because there is no alternative in his mind.

He admires Adam and Eve because they were naked, so innocent, so vulnerable, and so eager to behave decently. In them he sees a desire to be good, and yet their failure to do so. A failure that from a Tralfamadorian perspective, was fated and therefore, inevitable. Billy aligns himself with his inability to act.

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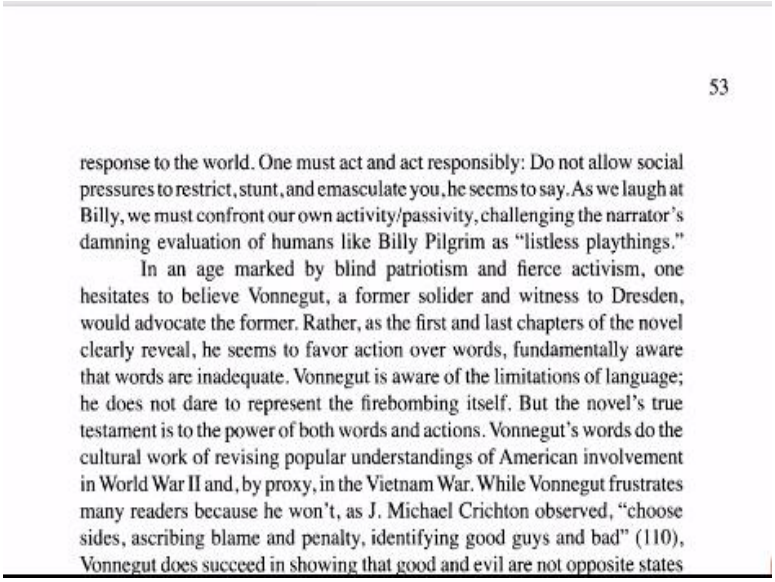

response to the world. One must act and act responsibly: Do not allow social pressures to restrict, stunt, and emasculate you, he seems to say. As we laugh at Billy, we must confront our own activity/passivity, challenging the narrator's damning evaluation of humans like Billy Pilgrim as "listless playthings."

In an age marked by blind patriotism and fierce activism, one hesitates to believe Vonnegut, a former solider and witness to Dresden, would advocate the former. Rather, as the first and last chapters of the novel clearly reveal, he seems to favor action over words, fundamentally aware that words are inadequate. Vonnegut is aware of the limitations of language; he does not dare to represent the firebombing itself. But the novel's true testament is to the power of both words and actions. Vonnegut's words do the cultural work of revising popular understandings of American involvement in World War II and, by proxy, in the Vietnam War. While Vonnegut frustrates many readers because he won't, as J. Michael Crichton observed, "choose sides, ascribing blame and penalty, identifying good guys and bad" (110), Vonnegut does succeed in showing that good and evil are not opposite states

By treating Billy as a comic butt, Vonnegut encourages the reader to resist the urge of passive response to the world. One must act and act responsibly. Do not allow social pressures restrict stunt and emasculate you, he seems to say. As we laugh at Billy, we must confront our own activities/passivity, challenging the narrator's damning evaluation of humans like Billy Pilgrim's as listless playthings becomes interesting.

The lack of choice, the unavailability of agency becomes interesting, and it is also the tragedy, the real tragedy of the war as we can see. Now it is interesting to see Vonnegut's authorial position in this. He is definitely not laughing at Billy Pilgrim. He is just portraying the character as a tragic character, as a tragic hero of his times. Now the irony is and this is the traumatic conditions that informs the novel.

The irony is that all these characters are actually pathetic characters. They are emasculated, infantilized. They are rendered pathetic in quality. And that is a tragedy that they cannot be tragic. There is no tragedy valuable. There is no choice valuable. There is no agency valuable.

It is complete absence of agency, which also is an absence of tragedy to a certain extent, is what makes the novel so dark in quality. It is where the dark humor the sort of flippant tone comes in, as we saw also in "Catch-22", the Joseph Heller novel. The only response is that one can do.

The only way you can respond, engage through this absurdity of violence around you is through this dark laughter, this dark humor, the exhausted laughter which is not a laughter of happiness, but the laughter of cynicism, the laughter of nihilism, the laughter of exhaustion, the laughter of emptiness, which is something which you see here as well.

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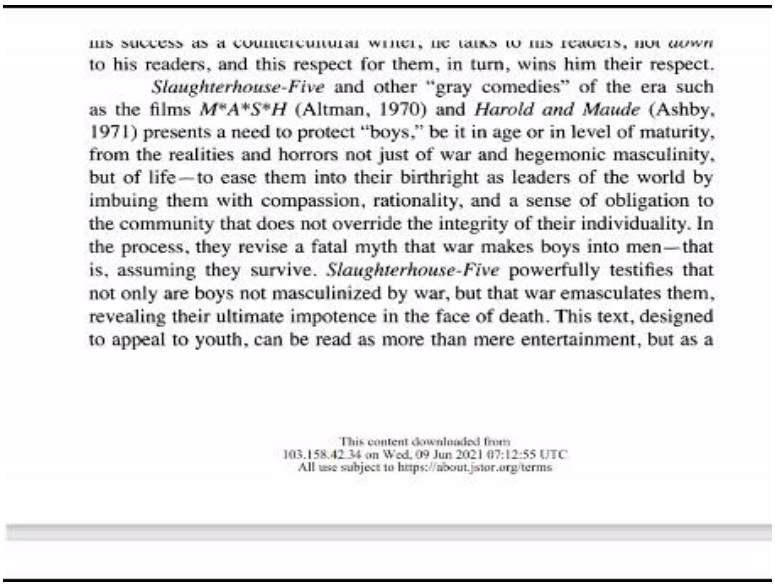

his success as a countercultural writer, he talks to his readers, not *down* to his readers, and this respect for them, in turn, wins him their respect.

Slaughterhouse-Five and other "gray comedies" of the era such as the films *M*A*S*H* (Altman, 1970) and *Harold and Maude* (Ashby, 1971) presents a need to protect "boys," be it in age or in level of maturity, from the realities and horrors not just of war and hegemonic masculinity, but of life—to ease them into their birthright as leaders of the world by imbuing them with compassion, rationality, and a sense of obligation to the community that does not override the integrity of their individuality. In the process, they revise a fatal myth that war makes boys into men—that is, assuming they survive. *Slaughterhouse-Five* powerfully testifies that not only are boys not masculinized by war, but that war emasculates them, revealing their ultimate impotence in the face of death. This text, designed to appeal to youth, can be read as more than mere entertainment, but as a

To conclude the novel, "Slaughterhouse-Five" is represented as a gray comedy. It is something of so dark comedy about time, which is tragic but not quite tragic, because it does not have the grandeur of tragedy because it can just be pathetic at best.

"Slaughterhouse-Five" powerfully testifies that not only are boys not masculinized by war, but that war emasculates them instead revealing the ultimate importance in the face of death.

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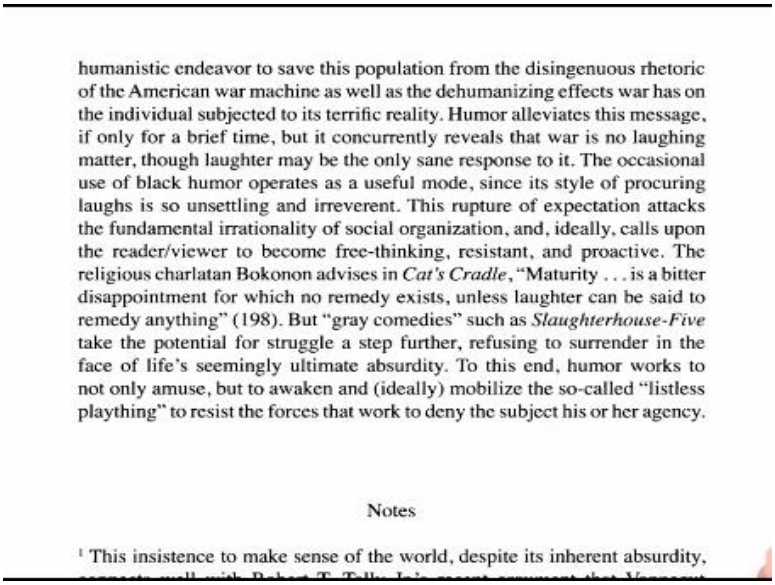

humanistic endeavor to save this population from the disingenuous rhetoric of the American war machine as well as the dehumanizing effects war has on the individual subjected to its terrific reality. Humor alleviates this message, if only for a brief time, but it concurrently reveals that war is no laughing matter, though laughter may be the only sane response to it. The occasional use of black humor operates as a useful mode, since its style of procuring laughs is so unsettling and irreverent. This rupture of expectation attacks the fundamental irrationality of social organization, and, ideally, calls upon the reader/viewer to become free-thinking, resistant, and proactive. The religious charlatan Bokonon advises in *Cat's Cradle*, "Maturity . . . is a bitter disappointment for which no remedy exists, unless laughter can be said to remedy anything" (198). But "gray comedies" such as *Slaughterhouse-Five* take the potential for struggle a step further, refusing to surrender in the face of life's seemingly ultimate absurdity. To this end, humor works to not only amuse, but to awaken and (ideally) mobilize the so-called "listless plaything" to resist the forces that work to deny the subject his or her agency.

Notes

[1] This insistence to make sense of the world, despite its inherent absurdity,

This text designed to appeal to youth can be read as more than mere entertainment but as a humanistic endeavor to save this population from the disingenuous rhetoric of the American war machine as well as the dehumanizing effects war has on the individual subjected to this terrific reality. It just reveals it depicts the dehumanization of war.

It just tells us how war converts this young boys into instruments, who were just execute the will of this centers of power, centers of political power. This immature naïve boys who will never become men, who will never grow up, who will never who either will be killed in the war or who will stay this confused male mind forever. Will never just become mature.

Will never have enlightenment. Will never really have a rational normal life. This is a causal, it is a human tragedy. This is a human death in the war at a psychological real level. Humor alleviates this message, but if only for a brief time, but it concurrently reveals that war is no laughing matter though laughter may be the only sane response to it.

The occasional use of black humor operates as a useful mode, since the style of procuring laughs is so unsettling and irreverent. This is the interesting that we talked about also in Joseph Heller's "Catch-22". The irreverence, the irreverent attitude to war is exactly how humor gets played and humor gets executed. Because humor is not just it is not a humor of happiness as we keep telling.

It is the humor of irreverence, the humor of cynicism, the humor of nihilism, the humor of mockery, the humor of flippancy, the humor of sarcasm. Therein lies the quality of humor in these novels, which is also quite subversive, in a political way. This rupture of exception attacks the fundamental irrationality of social organization and ideally calls upon the reader or viewer to become free thinking, resistant, and proactive.

It just makes us more aware that, we should be proactive, and this humor of the novel makes us more resistant to totalitarianism, to authoritarianism, to act so authoritarianization. And, so critically examined authority in a very intelligent way.

To this end, but gray comedies such as “Slaughterhouse-Five”, take the potential for struggle a step further, refusing to surrender in the face of life’s seemingly ultimate absurdity. To this end humor works to not only amuse, but to awaken and ideally mobilize the so called listless playthings to resist the forces that work to deny the subject his or her agency.

The humor in these novels, they also have some kind of a regenerated potential. It can also awaken us and in the process, we also have a better claim of our agency, a better knowledge of our agency or agencyless. It forces us to resist any institution, any authority, which takes away one’s agency albeit benevolently albeit in a quality of protection.

It is something found increasingly resonant in the world we live in today as well. “Slaughterhouse-Five” is one of the greatest cultural artifacts in our mind, in a postmodern setting. It is a great anti-war novel, but also as a mentioned it is a cultural act.

It talks about the different stages of war, differences of human evolution, and how violence always seems to be a connecting metaphor, violence always seems to be some kind of a vector in human evolution through which, certain forms of legitimization takes place. Certain very evil forms of legitimization takes place where certain sections of people are sent to fight the war for the whimsical, irrational power, greed the certain other positions of political centers have.

This novel is some kind of a wakeup call for us realize that we should not be pawns in acts of war. The figure of Billy Pilgrim is exactly this. He is emasculated, he suffers from PTSD, he suffers from trauma, and he is essentially unhinged. He is just a freak in space and time, as mentioned. But that quality really is disturbing, unsettling, and also in a certain sense subversive.

Because that state of being traumatized, the state of being dislocated at a permanent, spatiotemporal level. That spatial, that spatiotemporal dislocation also makes us more aware of the things we take for granted, and things we should not take for granted. So, in that sense, it becomes a profoundly political novel.