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"WHY NOT YOU?"  
KURT VONNEGUT'S DEBT TO THE BOOK OF JOB

"And I alone am escaped to tell you."

The Messenger to Job

For many—perhaps, for most—of Kurt Vonnegut's readers, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) remains his finest work—an impressive achievement whether looked at as a human document or as a work of art. Although many critics have discussed the novel, its themes, debts to other writers, reliance on personal experience, and so forth, no one has yet discussed Vonnegut's considerable debt to the Book of Job.

Vonnegut wrote *Slaughterhouse-Five* looking back on the Second World War from the vantage point of twenty to twenty-five years later. Unlike Joseph Heller who wrote his equally well-known *Catch-22* (1961) under similar circumstances, Vonnegut criticizes the moral confusion occasioned by this or any war's brutal, excessive destruction done in the name of goodness, justice, and Mom's apple pie rather than focusing on the utter cynicism and greed summarized in Heller's often repeated pejorative phrase "everyone cashing in." In contrast, Vonnegut ironically admits that "one way or another, I got two or three dollars for every person killed [in Dresden]. Some business I'm in."<sup>1</sup> Like Lot's wife, whom he applauds for daring to witness the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorah at the price

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<sup>1</sup> *Palm Sunday* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1981), p. 302.

of being turned into a pillar of salt, Vonnegut, too, "because it was so human" looked back at the conflagration of Dresden.<sup>2</sup> Further, he insists that, as in the case of god's destruction of "the cities of the plain," the human destruction of Dresden in all its horror was done in the name of the best of causes: the overcoming of evil.

Looking back Vonnegut raises anew Job's questions: "Why do the innocent suffer?" "Why do the evil prosper?" The answers Job heard finally from out of the whirlwind puzzled him for they explained nothing. God's words implied that a person's goodness does not guarantee that he or she will escape evil nor that he or she is incapable of doing evil. Job's expectation, that evil would not be visited upon a good or an innocent person, was as ill-founded as the modern American belief in the end justifying the means and, therefore, no evil will be committed in a good cause; such as the defeat of Hitler, Japan, or Iraq. Vonnegut demurs suggesting that the destruction of the innocent was as common during the second world war as it was when Job bewailed his fate.

For much of his career as a writer and for half his career as a novelist, Vonnegut wrestled with the attendant Jobian issue of why he personally survived while one hundred-thirty-five thousand people died during the Dresden fire storm in which "the city appeared to boil" (*Palm Sunday*, p. 302). Returning home after being repatriated as a prisoner of war he discovered that although he could share interesting stories of the war and the camaraderie he experienced, again and again he failed to find the right words or theme through which to describe the massacre, its aftermath, or its meaning—if any. Unable to accept passively the destruction, he asked the survivor's questions, "Why was I allowed to survive when so many innocent, good people perished?" "How could this terrible destruction have been allowed to happen?" "How could human beings do such awful things to one another?"

In novel after novel Vonnegut tried to deal with these difficult questions either directly or indirectly. In *The Sirens of Titan* (1959), for

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<sup>2</sup> *Slaughterhouse-Five* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1969), p. 19.

All quotations are to this edition, since the various paperback reprints, although more readily available, use different pagination.

example, he probed into history for the answers, but found nothing there but absurdity. In *Mother Night* (1962) he examined the possibility of good collaborating with the forces of evil in order to subvert and ultimately destroy such forces, but concluded that this kind of naivete was no match for a truly powerful evil force, such as Fascism. In *Cat's Cradle* (1963), on the other hand, he explored the possibility of stoic cynicism as an answer to the moral dilemma through his splendid creation of Bokonon and Bokononism.<sup>3</sup> If human beings are so hell-bent on their own destruction, then, suggests *Cat's Cradle*, no one or nothing can stop them, and all the novelist can do is warn against the impending disaster becoming the proverbial canary in a coal mine.

In *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965) Vonnegut explored the opposite tact examining the possibility of doing good works as a way of stopping or at least retarding the forces of evil. "Sell all you have and give it to the poor," was Jesus' admonition in the first century, so Eliot Rosewater established his foundation to give away money. When the phone rang he answered: "Rosewater Foundation, how may we help you?" and hoped that money might indeed help the person on the other end of the line. But good works ultimately did not appear to slow evil down. Instead, they actually may have encouraged it to greater extravagances of connivance and fraud. Evil itself wormed its way into the very heart of his good works and so threatened to destroy the Rosewater Foundation itself until Eliot thwarted it by giving away all he had.

When Vonnegut finally came to write directly about surviving the Dresden massacre in *Slaughterhouse-Five* he discovered that dwelling on such massive destruction had a profound impact on the novel's style:

". . . I felt the need to say this every time a character died: "So it goes." This exasperated many critics, and it seemed fancy and tiresome to me, too. But it somehow had to be said. It was a clumsy way of saying what Celine managed to imply so much more naturally in everything he wrote, in effect: "Death

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<sup>3</sup> Diogenes, the patron saint of cynics, would warmly approve of Bokonon and his view of life as given in the *Books of Bokonon*.

and suffering can't matter nearly as much as I think they do. Since they are so common, my taking them so seriously must mean that I am insane. I must try to be saner." <sup>4</sup>

The significant achievement of *Slaughterhouse-Five* lies in Vonnegut's discovering artistically—in the novel's form and style—and personally—with his feelings and thoughts—how to deal with commonplace death and suffering. Through his happy invention of the Tralfamadorians he shifts the novel's perspective from a human one, such as that of most of the Book of Job, to God's, such as that found in the conclusion of the Book of Job. When Billy Pilgrim finds himself in the Tralfamadorian zoo he asks the obvious human question: "Why me?" The answer he receives both puzzles and instructs him:

"That is a very Earthling question to ask, Mr. Pilgrim. Why you? . . . Why anything? Because this moment simply is. . . . Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim trapped in . . . this moment. There is no why." (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 66)

Job asked the same question, "Why me?" hundreds of years before Billy beginning in the prologue to the Book of Job when a series of messengers arrive bringing news to Job not of family members being captured by strange beings in a flying saucer, but of horrendous destruction. The first reveals that all of Job's servants have been killed; the second that his sheep have been destroyed by fire from heaven; the third that nomads have carried off his camels and slaughtered his herdsmen; and the fourth brings the worst news of all, that a hurricane suddenly killed all his sons and daughters. Naturally Job is heart-stricken. He rends his clothes, and goes and sits on the village dunghill in deep mourning. As the book proper begins he receives visits from three friends who attempt to comfort

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<sup>4</sup> *Palm Sunday*, p. 296.

him with conventional wisdom arguing that evil occurs to a a person who has done evil.<sup>5</sup>

But Job's tragedy is that he is a good man who although he did no evil nevertheless experienced great loss. Similarly, Dresden was a "good" city—that is, an "open," unarmed civilian city whose architectural beauty was legendary—yet Dresden was destroyed for a good purpose: "to hasten the end of the war" (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 155). One of Job's friends maintains that his innocent sons and daughters were destroyed for a comparable reason: to "teach Job a lesson." (Both Vonnegut and Job suggest that the price paid in innocent deaths is too high.) By the end of the book, Job accepts the imperfection of the world, and his inability to account for the evil in it. As the man of faith he also comes to accept the goodness of his Creator, although that goodness may not always be apparent in the less than perfect world in which he must live. In effect, he states simply: "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Vonnegut, as a rational atheist, derives none of the consolation which Job did from the answers of traditional faith. He can and does find some consolation, however, in accepting an imperfect world where the power to destroy is real and often terrifying, whether the agent be nature or human. Writing "A Letter to the Next Generation" in an "Open Forum" series of ads sponsored by Volkswagen, Vonnegut concludes by giving a lengthy list of natural disasters and saying: "If people think Nature is their friend, then they sure don't need an enemy." In other words, do not look to Nature for moral guidance.

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<sup>5</sup> Job claims, rightly, that he is innocent, god-fearing, and has always done good not evil. The second friend contends that evil occurs because a person neglects to perform certain required ceremonies or religious duties, and if only Job will repent and perform them, all will be well.

But Job says correctly that he has been a model of piety and has left no ceremony unobserved nor any duty unperformed. The third friend then argues that evil never occurs without a reason, and, therefore, if destruction has been visited upon Job then that is ipso facto proof that Job is indeed guilty of something. If he will but "search his heart" to discover his mistake, and repent of it then all will be well. But Job has done no wrong. As Jesus was to say a few centuries later: "The rain falls on the just and the unjust." If a hurricane destroys people or property that is no reason to believe such people were guilty of any wrong-doing.

In a few of his novels however, the power of reason and goodness does prove real and occasionally even wins out over evil. So Eliot Rosewater gives all he has away to frustrate the unscrupulous young lawyer, Norman Mushari, and Malachi Constant in *Sirens of Titan* at long last learns "to love whoever is around to be loved." As a character in one of Bertolt Brecht plays says: "In the worst of times, there are good people." In *Slaughterhouse-Five* there may well be a momentary triumph of goodness, but if so it is fleeting and fairly complex: Billy Pilgrim becomes the chief attraction in a zoo on the planet Tralfamadore in another galaxy where he and Montana Wildhack are put on exhibit as interesting specimens of an endangered species. Although their captors have long ago concluded, based upon thousands of years of observation, that the most prominent characteristic of human beings appears to be their ability to self-destruct, these two copulate and produce an off-spring while being held captive in the zoo. Their action illustrates humanity's drive to continue the race which counterbalances its drive to destroy it.<sup>6</sup>

This modest hopefulness is a far cry from the total despair experienced in *Cat's Cradle* by Mona the incredibly beautiful woman of the Sunday supplements who, as the world ends, refuses to make love to Jonah-John because "that's how babies are made," and no sane person would want to have a child as the world ends. But Montana Wildhack and Billy Pilgrim, less worldly-wise and far more childlike, under much less favorable conditions in the Tralfamadorean zoo amidst their Sears Roebuck furnishings, reproduce to the delight and glee of their audience. Perhaps they represent humanity's ultimate function in the universe: to puzzle and delight extra-terrestrial on-lookers with the paradox of beings who both reproduce—that is, give life—and destroy themselves—that is, take life—at one and the same time.

Pointing to this human penchant for self-destruction through war and brutality becomes part of Vonnegut's role as a latter-day Jobian messenger who brings the news of the "commonness" of death. To account

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<sup>6</sup> Compare *Deadeye Dick* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1982) where the voice of God announces that the purpose of humanity is "to reproduce. Nothing else really interests Me. All the rest is frippery" (p. 185).

for unmotivated human suffering he looks to the accidental nature of life. Some of this reasoning is already familiar from *The Sirens of Titan* where the Space Traveler maintains that "I was the victim of a series of accidents. ... As are we all." There is an important difference between the novels, however, for in *The Sirens of Titan* the accidents are caused by visitors from Tralfamadore who manipulated all human history for their own ends. Worse, as Salo their messenger, points out, these visitors are not even human beings or sentient creatures, but are machines. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, on the other hand, there appears no purpose whatsoever in human history nor is anything or anyone in control. Rather than continue to wrestle with the issue of "purpose" or lack of it, Vonnegut replaces the question, "Why me?" with its twin to which there is no answer, "Why not you?" Exactly the same pair of questions were posed in the conclusion of the Book of Job first by Elihu then by God as each asks Job in turn: Why did you expect that your goodness would give you immunity from the effects of evil or from accidents of nature? Human beings do not enjoy such immunity. Good people suffer and bad people suffer—"the rain falls on the just and the unjust." Suffering, by itself, is no measure either of a person's evil—as Job's three friends mistakenly maintain—nor of a person's goodness—as Job had assumed. Suffering simply is a part of this world and all human experience, and as Vonnegut suggests through his choice of epigraph from Martin Luther's Christmas carol "Away in the Manger": suffering is part of the human not the divine condition and no divine force will intervene in human history to modify much less to stop it:

the little Lord Jesus  
No crying He makes.

Informing Vonnegut's novel, therefore, is what might be called a fairly orthodox form of Judeo-Christian theology which nevertheless has often proven too challenging for some narrow-minded American school boards and other official bodies who, like Job's three friends, hold a simpler, safer view of human beings and their relation to the deity. Such people have many times attempted to ban, censor, or otherwise destroy the novel. Once, at

least, "*Slaughterhouse-Five* was actually burned in a furnace by a school janitor ... on instructions from the school committee."<sup>7</sup> Clearly the members of that committee were attempting to protect the young from the contents of this novel which they believed threatened their view of the world and religion. Vonnegut's book thus takes its place in an honorable company that includes the Book of Job, the Old Testament Prophets, and Jesus's Sermon on the Mount—all of which have at various times threatened the beliefs of those in authority.<sup>8</sup>

Much of the perceived threat stems from the morality central to these works, including *Slaughterhouse-Five*, which challenges orthodoxy by asserting that the terms, "punishment" and "reward" along with the values they embody do not make a lot of sense from the human, but only from the divine perspective. The unnerving implications of such a position are clear: If human beings cannot perceive much less receive rewards or punishments, then why would anyone do good rather than evil? According to the Book of Job and much of Judeo-Christian belief, a good person is simply a person who does good for its own sake rather than out of hope of reward or from fear of punishment. Good people are good rather than evil because that is who and what good people are. When people do good that becomes their reward. Someone who does evil, on the other hand, is simply someone who does evil which in turn becomes its own punishment. (Compare Ralph Waldo Emerson's equally disquieting notion of evil as "merely privative" in his "Divinity School Address.") None of Vonnegut's characters, including those in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is fundamentally evil; rather each is a human being to whom accidents happen. Most are innocent. As Vonnegut's father once astutely observed: "you never wrote a story with a villain in it" (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 7). Billy Pilgrim is neither

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<sup>7</sup> *Palm Sunday*, p. 4; see also pp. 3—17. In a "Dear Friend" letter written to solicit funds for the ACLU (The American Civil Liberties Union), Vonnegut reveals that *Slaughterhouse-Five* is among the ten "most frequently censored [and banned] books" in American public schools and libraries. Others in the top ten include John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*, Judy Blume, *Forever*, and Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*. "Kurt Vonnegut," undated letter, pp. 2—3.

<sup>8</sup> See for example the prologue to Vonnegut's *Jailbird* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1979), especially pages XVIII—XIX.



John Wayne, riding into the sunset to save Western civilization from the Fascists nor Jesus preaching the necessity of "doing good to those who do evil to you." Instead he is a young soldier in war and a child in peace who illustrates Celine's observation—quoted with approval by Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five*—that: "When not actually killing, your soldier's a child."

The child is, of course, not morally responsible as an adult would be. Someone else besides the child-soldier must be in charge and that person or persons can be held morally accountable for what happens. Vonnegut extends Celine's identification of soldiers as children through the novel's subtitle *Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade* which in turn links the great war to end all wars with one of the most futile, exploitive, cynical events in all of western European history: the Children's Crusade—a crusade that never went anywhere and never accomplished anything, except to provide ample prey for all kinds of human vultures to feed upon. In *Slaughterhouse-Five* the soldiers in World War II, like the children on their crusade, have little or no idea about what they are doing and often do not know even where they are. It was the generals who planned such glorious operations as the destruction of Dresden (see, for example, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, pp. 161-62).<sup>9</sup> The reduction of a monument of human civilization, such as the lovely city on the Elbe, to a pile of rubble overnight or the metamorphosis of hundreds-of-thousands of unarmed people into a "corpse factory" can, and, indeed, has happened in a world where "everything is permitted." In such a world, says Ivan Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the issue is not whether to believe in God or not, but the sheer overwhelming horror of the power of evil. Yet, as Eliot Rosewater, who also "found life meaningless, partly because of what [he] ... had seen in war," says to Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five*: "everything there was to know about life was in *The Brothers Karamazov* . . . 'But that isn't enough any more' . . ." (p. 87). Perhaps all anyone can do is to follow Theodore Roethke's advice, which Vonnegut quotes with approval, to "learn by going

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<sup>9</sup> Vonnegut may also be echoing the title of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's famous account of World War II *Crusade in Europe*.

where [we] . . . have to go" (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 18). But what of the child-soldiers who survive the massacre?

When the Americans and their guards did come out [next noontime after the Dresden fire storm], the sky was black with smoke. The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighborhood was dead. (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 153).

What do you say after a massacre? "Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds. And what do the birds say? All there is to say about a massacre, things like "Poo-tee-weet?" (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 17).

If the slaughterhouse itself, from which the novel takes its title, was once a house of death, it became, paradoxically during the inferno of the Dresden fire-bombing, a house of salvation when it gave oxygen to its occupants rather than to the fire storm. Similarly, while Vonnegut's novel is, in part, an account of the worst massacre of unarmed civilians in modern Europe, it is also a plea for a change in values and attitudes which would make other such massacres impossible. One way he accomplishes this mission is by playing the role of the messenger to Job and making the massacre itself public knowledge. The novel thrusts back into living memory in a way that cannot be ignored, a portion of American history which had never officially been acknowledged, and which had been either inadvertently or deliberately concealed. According to Vonnegut in the "twenty-seven-volume *Official History of the Army Air Force in World War Two* . . . there was almost nothing . . . about the Dresden raid, even though it had been such a howling success. The extent of the success had been kept a secret for many years after the war—a secret from the American people" (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 165).

In the pre-*Slaughterhouse-Five* novels, the bitterest satire occurs in another novel of even worse destruction *Cat's Cradle* where the purpose of human beings, to love whoever is around to love, is completely thwarted. On

the day the world ended, the question, "Who is left for me to love?" becomes as meaningless as a bird's call at the end of a massacre, "Poo-tee-weet," and in its place is another terrible question: "How can I, in this now empty world, 'find some neat way to die, too?'" (*Cat's Cradle*, p. 190). Vonnegut, so clearly passionate about the sacredness of human life, thus comments trenchantly on human stupidity and folly. His view of humanity, however, culminates—at least in his fiction through *Slaughterhouse-Five*—not in continued bitter reproaches nor in invective and threat, but in the serenity embodied in the Tralfamadorian total view of all time which eventually the hero of the novel, Billy Pilgrim, is able to share.

Like the writer of the Book of Job, Vonnegut affirms the essential goodness of *all* creation: "Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt"—an appropriate Tralfamadorian epitaph for Billy Pilgrim or anyone else able to "come unstuck in time." Critics, such as Tony Tanner, negate this consolation, however, when they ignore or argue away the fantastic premise of the novel which is essential if Billy is to experience then adopt the Tralfamadorian view of time. Tanner asserts that:

Billy Pilgrim . . . takes refuge in an intense fantasy life, which involves his being captured and sent to a remote planet . . . . He also comes "unstuck in time" and present moments during the war may either give way to an intense re-experiencing of moments from the past or unexpected hallucinations [sic] of life in the future.<sup>10</sup>

Following such critics' reasoning, one might equally well suggest that Gregor Samsa only hallucinates becoming a cockroach in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." But both Vonnegut's and Kafka's stories are fantastic, rather than realistic and neither hero is bound by the conventions of realistic fiction. Billy does not hallucinate; instead, as Vonnegut tells us repeatedly, he simply, if fantastically, comes unstuck in time and is, therefore, able to move in time forward as well as backward. In other words,

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<sup>10</sup> Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction, 1950—1970* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 195.

he enjoys the nonhuman consolation of seeing time and events as God or as the Tralfamadorians see them: all at once. Equally fantastic is Billy's ability to escape suffering by viewing only those good moments in his life where "nothing hurt."

But besides Billy's non-human perspective Vonnegut offers a more human, less Godlike one through the many references to Reinhold Neibuhr's prayer which Montana Wildhack carries in a locket about her neck. The prayer asks for help in viewing the human situation in light of each person's individual abilities to cope with suffering and loss:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom always to tell the difference. (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 181).

Familiar to many Americans as the prayer of Alcoholics Anonymous, Neibuhr's words describe the end point of Vonnegut's moral odyssey through his first six novels as, like Job, he moves from anger through disbelief to rebellion until finally coming to accept what is and what must be.

Such a change in vision comes about through Vonnegut's acceptance in this novel of suffering's central place in human experience—suffering which may be as total as the fire-bombing of Dresden or the atomic bombing of Hiroshima or the destruction of all that Job held dear. Donald Shriver, writing about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the martyred Lutheran German pastor executed for his part in the plot to assassinate Hitler, describes the value of such acceptance:

Suffering is the chief equalizer of human experience, and the authority of suffering . . . goes far on the way toward convincing us that there is such a thing as a "human community." Whatever the anthropologists tell us about human differences, a touch of suffering makes the whole world kin.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Bonhoeffer Remembered," *Union News* (New York: September 1984), p. 2.

Vonnegut thus accepts the mystery of human suffering and the presence of evil in the world for which there is not now nor can there ever be a fully satisfactory human explanation. Like Job before them, characters in Vonnegut's fiction ask, "Why me?" And like Job they hear only an echo, "Why not you?"

By accepting both motivated or unmotivated suffering as integral to human experience Vonnegut becomes free in the novels after *Slaughterhouse-Five* to satirize particular evils in the modern world rather than continuing to wrestle with the question of the nature and power of evil itself. *Galápagos* (1982), his eleventh novel, for example, makes brilliantly, satirically clear what many of his other novels along with a Kilgore Trout short story, "The Planet Gobblers" (*Palm Sunday*, p. 209), had only implied: human beings are a danger to the planet, and if they are not controlled in some way, they will destroy all forms of life.

*Slaughterhouse-Five* itself, however, reflects William Butler Yeats's belief that: "a poet writes out of his personal life [and] in his finest work out of its tragedy, whatever it be . . . ." Vonnegut writes out of the "tragedy" he personally experienced which raised acutely the profound moral issues with which he has had to wrestle as an adult human being and as a writer. He says that *Slaughterhouse-Five* results from his "duty dance with death" without which, he adds quoting Celine, "no art is possible" (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 18). Perhaps the rigors of this duty dance help account for the difficulties he encountered in writing this novel as well as the relief he experienced in completing it: "I felt," he says, "after I finished *Slaughterhouse-Five* that I didn't have to write at all anymore if I didn't want to. It was the end of some sort of career."<sup>12</sup> After wrestling with some of the most profound and some of the most difficult human questions in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut promised himself: "The next one I write is going to be fun" (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, p.19), which proved true in the wild comedy of *Breakfast of Champions* (1973).

It would be almost twenty years after the completion of *Slaughterhouse-Five* before Vonnegut would return to the Jobian issues raised for him

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<sup>12</sup> *Wampeters, Foma & Granfaloons* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1976), p. 280.

by World War II, and in *Bluebeard* (1987) present a picture of the end of the war in Europe as a field crowded with people: the lunatics, the refugees, the war prisoners, the concentration camp victims—all the ragged remnants of an exhausted world, but more important: all survivors. These are living human beings, rather than the stacked corpses of the Hospital of Hope and Mercy in *Cat's Cradle* or the "corpse mine" found in the desolate Dresden landscape of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. But *Bluebeard* with its happy ending in praise of human creativity and community will appear only two decades later.<sup>13</sup>

In *Slaughterhouse-Five* Vonnegut as the Jobian messenger having looked into the depths of the fire storm brings news of the disaster together with an incisive examination of the profound moral, social, and theological issues it raises—issues which will remain central to all human experience: the question of the power of evil, the awareness of inhuman destruction, and the omnipresence of human suffering. Like the author of the Book of Job, he parries the most human of all questions "Why me?" with the unanswerable assertion "Why not you?" Like the editor of the Book of Job who hundreds of years after the book's composition tacked on the happy ending in which Job receives everything he lost back and more—except for his children—Vonnegut, too, adds the Tralfamadorian affirmation about all life in whatever form: "Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt." A most fitting epitaph for Billy Pilgrim who "alone . . . escaped to tell you."

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<sup>13</sup> See my forthcoming essay, "'O Happy Meat': Joy and Acceptance in Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos* and *Bluebeard*."