

Kurt Vonnegut Society

Call for Papers
American Literature Association Annual Conference
May 23-26, 2019
Boston, MA

The Kurt Vonnegut Society will sponsor two panels at the upcoming ALA Conference:

Vonnegut and Race

Speaking at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City in 1982, Vonnegut recounted his Indianapolis boyhood in which lynchings of African Americans were common, an apartheid stricter than in South Africa was enforced, and Jews were not welcome in universities and other public places. While acknowledging improved racial relations since then, Vonnegut nevertheless addressed the lingering effects of slavery and colonization in America in his sermon. Many of his fictional works tackle such issues as well. His first novel, *Player Piano*, for instance, satirizes the appropriation of Native American cultures at the Meadows, former Indian land turned into a corporate training camp for junior executives. He ties racism, anti-Semitism and fascism together in the figure of Dr. Lionel J.D. Jones, publisher of *The White Christian Minuteman*, in the novel *Mother Night*. And in *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut punctures the mythology of America's founding, arguing that the first Europeans to arrive on the continent were not the freedom-lovers of lore, but actually white "sea pirates" intent on using black human beings as "machinery." As Vonnegut critiques real race relations in America, he also invents relations with imagined races, including the space alien Tralfamadorians and the devolved, furry, small-brained humans of *Galápagos*.

This panel seeks papers on Vonnegut and race, broadly construed. Topics might include Vonnegut and racial identity or race relations in America, or they might focus on Vonnegut's alien or invented races. What does a focus on racial difference contribute to our understanding of Vonnegut's work? How is Vonnegut's depiction of race tied to his own specific biographical and historical context? Are there ways that Vonnegut's views on race are relevant to our highly-polarized present moment in history?

Open Topic

We also invite proposals on any other aspect of Vonnegut's life or work.

Please send 250 word abstracts and a brief CV to the Kurt Vonnegut Society at vonnegutsociety@gmail.com by January 15, 2019. Please let us know as well which panel your abstract is proposed for, and include your name and academic affiliation as you'd like them listed in the ALA program.