

ALA 2020 – Kurt Vonnegut Society

Vonnegut and Religion

Perhaps the most well-known and well-discussed foray into religion in Kurt Vonnegut's corpus is Bokomonism in *Cat's Cradle*. However, throughout Vonnegut's novels, there are multiple and various engagements with ethics and morality, the so-called spiritual, the sacred, and the otherworldly. In *Sirens of Titan*, for example, readers encounter The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent, and in *Slapstick*, audiences are exposed to The Church of Jesus Christ the Kidnapped. *Slaughterhouse Five* famously introduces readers to Tralfamadorianism and offers the religious wisdom that Christianity teaches not to kill folks who are "well connected" and presents an alternative version of the gospel in which God "will punish horribly anybody who torments a bum who has no connections." *Breakfast of Champions* begins with an epigraph from the Book of Job, positions the narrator as Creator of the Universe, and explicitly deems Armistice Day, *Romeo and Juliet*, all music, and human awareness as sacred things. In *Timequake*, a humanist is defined as one who tries "to behave decently and honorably without any expectation of rewards or punishments in an afterlife," a statement which arguably situates humanism as a kind of religion.

This panel seeks presentations that address the role of religion, spirituality, morality, or other codes of ethics in Vonnegut's fiction. Questions to consider might include:

- How do Vonnegut's novels and/or short stories engage with organized religions, and to what effect?
- How can we reconcile fiction that points readers toward new forms of spiritual and sacred codes while apparently criticizing the same?
- How does Vonnegut's fiction address military or criminal justice ethics alongside codes of organized religion(s)?

We also welcome other creative approaches to the topic: Vonnegut and Religion.

Please send 250-300 word abstracts to vonnegutsociety@gmail.com with the subject line "ALA: Vonnegut and Religion" by January 10, 2020.

Roundtable

Whither Vonnegut Scholarship?

This roundtable will consider past, current, and future trajectories for Vonnegut scholarship. Presentations will be 4-8 minutes (depending on the number of participants) using these brief statements on the current state of Vonnegut studies as a stepping-off point for further discussion. Though any angle will be considered, topics of particular interest could include:

- Vonnegut and film
- Vonnegut and truth/post-truth
- Reconsiderations of established opinion on specific texts
- Vonnegut's theatrical works

- Vonnegut and his collaborators
- Newly uncovered historical contexts
- Vonnegut and social change after 2007
- Depression, anxiety, and mental health in his works
- Vonnegut's visual art
- Provocative pairings of texts for pedagogical purposes
- Sensitive readings of problematic scenes

We welcome lively proposals of 100-150 words, sent to yonnegutsociety@gmail.com with the subject line "ALA Roundtable" by January 10, 2020.