

*Slaughterhouse-Five*

Kurt Vonnegut

Jenna Conner Fall 2015

# How are we to read Billy Pilgrim?

○ *Are Vonnegut and Billy Pilgrim one in the same?*

*Evidence in the First Chapter:*

**Cacicedo:** Freud's Symptomology of Trauma  
(struggle to remember traumatic events, writing  
is therapeutic)

First Chapter is "pure autobiography"

**Matheson:** Chapter 1 means of tracing author's  
evolving attitude

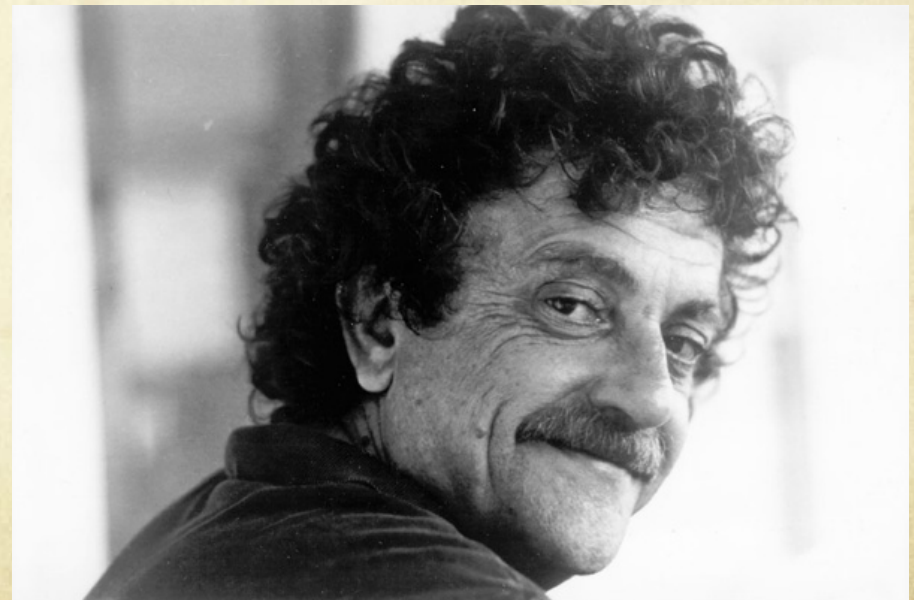
Showcases Vonnegut's position

Process of writing=cathartic release

*Evidence at the end of the Novel:*

**Edelstein:** Vonnegut distances himself starting  
in 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter

Narrator attends World's Fair and begins  
questioning his own present- this is when Billy  
and Vonnegut become one





# Is the novel autobiographical in the sense that Billy and Vonnegut are both victims?

**Vees-Gulani:** Uses psychiatric theory to offer insight into author's own psyche  
Billy and Vonnegut both victims of PTSD  
Novel=manifestation of Vonnegut's emotional/psychological struggle  
Billy's story is closely tied with Vonnegut's own experience  
Publishing *Slaughterhouse-Five*=integral step in Vonnegut's healing  
**Gallagher:** References interviews with Vonnegut in order to establish links between Pilgrim's conflict of duality and identity and Vonnegut's  
Novel=catharsis for Vonnegut  
Foreshadowing hints to parallels between author and character



# Is Billy merely a fictionalized reflection of Vonnegut's experiences, and not a direct voice?

**Kunze:** Vonnegut uses his own experiences to save others from similar fate  
Vonnegut “uses [novel to warn the future of the threat of human indifference and ignorance”

“Vonnegut may be sympathetic to Billy, but does not rally behind Billy's approach to the world”

**Hume:** character reflects his own life and as a result, Vonnegut creates a hero archetype





# Is Billy a Christ Figure?

**Cacicedo:** Draws comparisons between Billy and Vonnegut in “re-existing the gospel message of Christ to his disciples

Billy is essentially reborn=Vonnegut’s way of rewriting many long held myths

**Edelstein:** “So it goes...” example of renewal, cyclical pattern, similarity to Christ and rebirth

“Billy is reborn from a womb-like, pleasant death (the obstetricians look at the suffering of the horse as they would have looked at Christ being taken down from the cross) not into paradise but into a life that is filled with the horrors of actual death.”

Idea of a manger

