



为什么你应该读冯内古特

题目: Why should you read Kurt Vonnegut

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Billy Pilgrim can't sleep because he knows aliens will arrive to abduct him in one hour.

毕利·皮尔格里姆难以入睡,因为他知道一个小时后 外星人会来把他绑走。

He knows the aliens are coming because he has become “unstuck” in time, causing him to experience events out of chronological order. Over the course of Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-five, he hops back and forth between a childhood trip to the Grand Canyon, his life as a middle-aged optometrist, his captivity in an intergalactic zoo, the humiliations he endured as a war prisoner, and more.

他知道外星人会来 因为他已经“脱离”了时间, 这让他经历的事情都不按照 正常的时间顺序。在库尔特·冯内古特的《五号屠宰场》中, 毕利穿梭于各种不同的经历中: 他儿时一次去大峡谷的旅行, 他作为一个中年配镜师的生活, 他在一个外星动物园的囚禁遭遇, 和他作为战俘时所经受的羞辱经历等等。

The title of Slaughterhouse-five and much of its source material came from Vonnegut's own experiences in World War II. As a prisoner of war, he lived in a former slaughterhouse in Dresden, where he took refuge in an underground meat locker while Allied forces bombed the city. When he and the other prisoners finally emerged, they found Dresden utterly demolished.

《五号屠宰场》的标题和大量素材 都来源于冯内古特 在二战中的亲身经历。作为一个战俘, 他被关押在 德累斯顿的一个废弃屠宰场中。当盟军轰炸城市的时候, 他躲在一个地下肉窖幸免于难。当他和其他战俘从地窖中出来时, 他们发现德累斯顿已被夷为平地。

unstuck

adj. 松开的;
失灵的

chronological

adj. 按时间前后顺序的

intergalactic

adj. 银河间的

slaughterhouse

n. 屠宰场

demolish

v. 摧毁

After the war, Vonnegut tried to make sense of human behavior by studying an unusual aspect of anthropology: the shapes of stories, which he insisted were just as interesting as the shapes of pots or **spearheads**.

战后，冯内古特试图解释人类的行为 通过研究人类学中的一个独特分支：故事的形状。他认为故事的形状和 罐子或者矛头的形状一样有趣。

To find the shape, he **graphed** the main character's fortune from the beginning to the end of a story. The zany curves he generated revealed common types of fairy tales and myths that echo through many cultures. But this shape can be the most interesting of all.

为了探索故事的形状，他用图表的形式表示 故事主人公从头到尾的经历。这些独特的曲线展现了 很多童话或神话的常见模式。这些模式在很多文化中都很普遍。但是接下来的这个形状 是所有曲线中最有趣的。

In a story like this, it's impossible to **distinguish** the character's good fortune from the bad. Vonnegut thought this kind of story was the truest to real life, in which we are all the victims of a series of accidents, unable to predict how events will impact us long term. He found the tidy, satisfying arcs of many stories at odds with this reality, and he set out to explore the **ambiguity** between good and bad fortune in his own work.

在这种类型的故事中，你很难分辨主人公的遭遇是好是坏。冯内古特认为这样的故事 是最能真实反映现实生活的。在这样的故事中，我们对一系列偶然事件无法反抗，我们无法预知这些事情对我们会有什么长久的影响。他发现那种平滑理想的故事走向 与现实不符。于是，他决定在他的作品中 探索顺境与逆境之间的一步之遥。

spearhead
n. 先锋

graph
n. 图表

distinguish
v. 辨别；区分

ambiguity
n. 歧义

When Vonnegut ditched clear-cut fortunes, he also abandoned straightforward chronology. Instead of proceeding tidily from beginning to end, in his stories “All moments, past, present and future always have existed, always will exist.”

Trafamadorians, the aliens who crop up in many of his books, see all moments at once. They “can see where each star has been and where it is going, so that the heavens are filled with rarefied, luminous spaghetti.” But although they can see all of time, they don’t try to change the course of events.

冯内古特不仅抛弃了绝对的好坏运气之分，他也抛弃了简单的时间顺序描述。不同于由开始到结尾的正常故事推进，在他的故事中，“过去、现在和将来都始终共同存在并延续。”特拉法马多尔人是一群在他书中反复出现的外星人，他们可以一次看到所有的时间节点。他们可以“看到所有星星所处的位置和它们将移动的轨迹，所以对他们来说天空像是覆满了缥缈闪烁的意大利面”。但即使他们可以看透时间，他们不会试图改变任何事件发生的轨迹。

While the Trafalmadorians may be at peace with their lack of agency, Vonnegut’s human characters are still getting used to it. In *The Sirens of Titan*, when they seek the meaning of life in the vastness of the universe, they find nothing but “empty heroics, low comedy, and pointless death.” Then, from their vantage point within a “chrono-synclastic infundibulum,” a man and his dog see devastating futures for their earthly counterparts, but can’t change the course of events. Though there aren’t easy answers available, they eventually conclude that the purpose of life is “to love whoever is around to be loved.”

虽然特拉法马多尔人安于不干涉外界的状态，冯内古特的人类角色还在为之苦恼。在《泰坦星的海妖》中，主人公们在浩瀚的宇宙中探索生命的奥义。到头来，他们只发现了“空洞的宏大、庸俗的滑稽以及无意义的死亡。”以他们所处的一个“时间-弹性漏斗”的视角，一个人和他的狗看到了他们令人惊愕的未来，但他们却不能改变事情发生的轨迹。虽然一句话很难概括他们的体会，但他们最终总结出人生的意义就在于“去爱身边可以去爱的人”。

straightforward
adj. 正直的；
坦率的

chronology
n. 年代学

luminous
spaghetti
夜光意大利面

vastness
n. 巨大；广
阔

chrono-
synclastic
infundibulum
时间弹性漏
斗

devastating
futures
令人惊愕的
未来

In Cat's Cradle, Vonnegut's characters turn to a different source of meaning: Bokonism, a religion based on harmless lies that all its adherents recognize as lies. Though they're aware of Bokonism's lies, they live their lives by these tenets anyway, and in so doing develop some genuine hope. They join together in groups called Karasses, which consist of people we "find by accident but [...] stick with by choice"—cosmically linked around a shared purpose. These are not to be confused with Granfalloon, groups of people who appoint significance to actually meaningless associations, like where you grew up, political parties, and even entire nations.

在《猫的摇篮》中，冯内古特笔下的角色有着另一种人生哲学：布克农教。这个宗教的信徒都公认这个宗教中的一切都是善意的谎言。即使信徒们知道布克农教的一切都是谎言，他们还是依照教义信条生活，并以此来获得一些抚慰人心的希望。书中的人聚集在一起组成了许多叫“卡拉斯”的群体，这个群体中的人是“偶然相识，但经过选择而在一起”。大家因为一个共同的目的，机缘巧合中产生了联系。这个群体不能与格朗法伦群体混为一谈，格朗法伦群体的人是给本身泛泛无意义的联系强加以重要意义，比如你长大的地方、政治派别、甚至国籍之类的联系。

Though he held a bleak view of the human condition, Vonnegut believed strongly that "we are all here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is." We might get pooped and demoralized, but Vonnegut interspersed his grim assessments with more than a few morsels of hope. His fictional alter ego, Kilgore Trout, supplied this parable: two yeast sat "discussing the possible purposes of life as they ate sugar and suffocated in their own excrement.

虽然冯内古特对于人类的处境很悲观，但他认为“我们存在是要帮助彼此共度难关，无论难关是什么。”我们可能被困难打倒而意志消沉，但冯内古特也在他尖锐的评论中，穿插着很多乐观和希望。他在小说中的分身，基尔戈·特劳特，曾给出了这个比喻：两个酵母坐在一起“探讨人生的意义”，他们一边吸收糖分一边又因他们产生的排泄物窒息而死。

adherents

recognize

布克农教

cosmically

adv.大规模

association

n.连接

demoralize

v.使士气低落

Because of their limited intelligence, they never came close to guessing that they were making champagne.” In spite of his insistence that we’re all here to fart around, in spite of his deep concerns about the course of human existence, Vonnegut also advanced the possibility, however slim, that we might end up making something good. And if that isn’t nice, what is?

因为他们智慧有限，它们从不曾想到它们其实是在生产香槟酒。尽管他常说我们始终在四处闲荡；尽管他为人类的生存忧愁思虑，冯内古特也提出了微小但存在的可能性，就是我们终将创造美好。还能有什么比这更好呢？

champagne

n. 香槟酒