



Novels 1976–1985: Slapstick / Jailbird / Deadeye Dick / Galápagos

Kurt Vonnegut, Sidney Offit (Editor)

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By 1976, the year that Kurt Vonnegut published his eighth novel, *Slapstick*, it was apparent that the author of *Slaughterhouse-Five* was more than a favorite of the sixties' counterculture, more than an acidly witty public personality and a gadfly of the military-industrial complex—more, even, than one of America's most widely read living writers. Out of the sweeping spotlight of popular success emerged the enduring Vonnegut: a satiric fabulist to rival Mark Twain, a comic storyteller whose books are as morally serious as they are imaginative and amusing.

With the four novels collected here Vonnegut was recognized as an original American classic, the architect of an oeuvre built to last, a body of work tightly joined and cleanly made, designed along lines entirely his own. This third volume in the *Library of America*'s definitive edition of his fiction opens with *Slapstick*, the memoirs of Dr. Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain, a hundred-year-old former president of the United States and the promulgator of an ingenious national program to stamp out "American loneliness." By giving every citizen a new middle name, President Swain, himself assigned to the computer-generated Daffodil clan, also gives them a numberless network of concerned "relatives"—a taste of the familial bliss that Swain once enjoyed with his twin sister, Eliza, his soulmate and missing half, now dead beneath an avalanche on Mars.

Jailbird (1979) is a political memoir of a less fantastic sort, chronicling the misadventures of Walter F. Starbuck, a once-idealistic government functionary who, through no wrongdoing of his own, has become embroiled in every major national scandal from Sacco and Vanzetti to Watergate. *Deadeye Dick* (1982) is the story of a talentless playwright's lifelong struggle to atone for the accidental crimes of his youth, the foolishness of his father, and the sins of his country. And in *Galápagos* (1985), a favorite of the author's among his books, a ghost from the future reveals how and why a million years ago—during the global ecological disaster of 1986—humankind abandoned the land for the sea and embarked upon an unlikely evolution. The volume is rounded out with an assortment of Vonnegut rarities: speeches, essays, and commentary that touch upon the themes and particulars of these novels.

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Date : Published May 1st 2014 by Library of America

ISBN : 9781598533040

Author : Kurt Vonnegut , Sidney Offit (Editor)

Format : Hardcover 878 pages

Genre : Literature, Fiction, Classics

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From Reader Review Novels 1976–1985: Slapstick / Jailbird / Deadeye Dick / Galápagos for online ebook

Mills College Library says

Fiction V947n 2014

Darwin8u says

This Library of America Volume N° 252 contains the following four Vonnegut novels:

1. Slapstick, or Lonesome No More! (November 16, 2016)
2. Jailbird (November 18, 2016)
3. Deadeye Dick (November 26, 2016)
4. Galápagos (December 11, 2016)

I re-read all four of these novels again this year (I read them all when I was young, some several times). I've hyper-linked to my individual reviews for your viewing pleasure. These aren't all top-shelf Vonnegut. But still, some are pretty damn close.

Brian says

I read all of these years ago when I was a glutton for Vonnegut. "Deadeye Dick" I remember enjoying very much, and "Slapstick" even more so. I may have to reread "Galapagos" to be sure why I wasn't smitten with it the first time.

Brendan says

These four novels are not my favorite works of Vonnegut; his oft-repeated theme of human apocalypse wears a little thin here. But the subtle interweaving of connectedness between the stories and his compassionate, wry sense of humor is worth experiencing.

Scott Southard says

I reviewed this book on WKAR's Current State. You can listen to my review here:

<http://wkar.org/post/book-review-kurt...>

You can also read my review below.

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Listen:

One of my writing heroes is Kurt Vonnegut and for four years I had his home phone number sitting on my desk. That blessed number was a present from a friend of mine and every day it taunted me, teased me. When Vonnegut died in 2007, I threw the number away. I never had the guts to call it.

So it goes.

The Library of America has been republishing Vonnegut's complete fiction library in hardcover. This May, volume three, Novels 1976-1985, will be released and it includes what I would consider four lost classics by this master American novelist. If you only know Vonnegut from Slaughterhouse-Five, Cat's Cradle, and Breakfast of Champions, consider your summer reading list planned.

In his memoir *Palm Sunday*, Vonnegut graded his novels and he gave the first book in the collection, *Slapstick*, a D. Mr. Vonnegut, I think that is unfair. In fact, this is one of Vonnegut's most imaginative tales. *Slapstick* is the story of Dr. Wilbur Daffodill-11 Swain, the last President of the United States. The campaign slogan that got him elected was "Lonesome no more!" He has a twin sister, and when they are together they form a super intelligence.

While *Slapstick* is mad and outlandish, *Jailbird*, the next book, is almost subdued and in our reality. This novel tells the story of Walter F. Starbuck, who was the only person to go to jail for the Watergate Scandal.

Deadeye Dick, the next novel, follows the life of Rudy Waltz. He is living with the guilt of a murder. As a child, Rudy shot a gun out of his window, accidentally killing a woman in another house. It is probably the most tragic of the works in the collection.

The fourth and final book is a true gem. *Galapagos* is the story of the evolution of mankind, or the devolution of it, depending on your perspective. The story is told by a ghost who watches these descendants of man for over a million years, waiting for the chance to enter a blue tunnel and go to the afterlife.

It's now been more than seven years since Vonnegut has become unstuck in our time. Sadly, I have little left to discover around one of my favorite writers, but thanks to the Library of America they make it easier for everyone else. Honestly, I'm a little jealous of those who haven't read these works yet.

Oh, and finally, why didn't I call Vonnegut? I'm sure he would've been nice to me, but I would have been the awkward stalking fan. It would have been a short call. I have no delusions of us being up all night talking on the phone until the birds started chirping:

Poo-tee-weet.

Traci says

Full disclose - I only read *Slapstick!* or *Lonesome No More*. I had to get this collection due to the fact that our standalone copy at work was checked out and never returned.

Read it as it was on a recommended list. 2nd work of Vonnegut's I've tried - 2nd one I just didn't care for. Don't see me picking up anything else by him, recommended or not :(
