



Understanding Kurt Vonnegut (Understanding Contemporary American Literature)

By William Rodney Allen

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"Understanding Kurt Vonnegut" is a critical analysis of Vonnegut's novels. After dealing with his early work in science fiction in the 1950s - "Player Piano" and "The Sirens of Titan" - this study pays special attention to Vonnegut's "major phase" in the 1960s, which consists of four extremely diverse but fully realized novels: "Mother's Night"; "Cat's Cradle"; "God Bless You, Mr Rosewater" and "Slaughterhouse-Five"; the critical backlash that resulted after Vonnegut published "Breakfast of Champions" and "Slapstick" in the 1970s, two admittedly weak novels. In the 1980s, Vonnegut turned away from his characteristic mode of science fiction to what the study calls "social/political realism". "Jailbird", "Deadeye Dick", "Galapagos" and "Bluebeard" are compelling works that prove Vonnegut is still a vital force in contemporary American literature.

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Review

"As both literary critic and academic, Allen cuts through the clarity and the humor, the deceptively simple and the downright silly, to offer a careful... analysis of Vonnegut the serious artist." - Small Press "Allen centers on the author's most experimental period, reading *Mother Night* as a tautly structured and tightly focused narrative confession, *Cat's Cradle* as an exuberant test of such limits, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* as a significant shift to realism, and *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a masterful transposition of time and space. Among the later works, Allen prefers *Jailbird* and *Bluebeard* for their apt renderings of important cultural, social, and political issues." - American Literary Scholarship"

From the Inside Flap

A critical companion to Vonnegut's early novels

About the Author

William Rodney Allen teaches English at the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts in Natchitoches. His other books include *Walker Percy: A Southern Wayfarer*, *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut*, and *The Coen Brothers: Interviews*.

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