

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Marc Leeds. *The Vonnegut Encyclopedia: An Authorized Compendium*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995. xvi + 693 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-29230-9.

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## Listen:

Kurt Vonnegut's words have come unstuck in time. Through the mysterious manipulation of electrons, which as it turns out are really just ones and zeros, Marc Leeds has turned Vonnegut's 18 novels into one very large encyclopedia and concordance which no serious student of America's most singular voice should be without. The fact that such projects are generally reserved for the utterances of deities, or at least writers who are pushing up daisies, is a fact which Vonnegut must surely be aware of since it is an authorized compendium.

Hiho.

*The Vonnegut Encyclopedia* is an outstanding reference tool. The compiler, Marc Leeds, took painstaking care to include an exhaustive list of cross references which connect all of Vonnegut's major works as well as interviews and shorter pieces of both fiction and nonfiction which have appeared over the past 30 years in various publications such as *Playboy*. It is indeed unfortunate that Vonnegut is not given the credit he deserves in the academy since he is undoubtedly one of America's finest social critics. This volume should serve to reinforce this fact.

Listen:

When I was fourteen years old and a freshman in high school in Ashtabula Ohio (which Vonnegut correctly identified as the "asshole of the universe" in that very novel) I was once kicked out of a study hall because Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* tickled my funny-bone like it had never been tickled before. No matter how hard I tried I couldn't stop laughing. So it goes.

Vonnegut somehow spoke to me. He understood what I did: that life was a ridiculous series of foul ups, blunders, and cosmic jokes which in no way made life any less worth living. His commentary on the American experience is unique. With the publication of this encyclopedia the breadth of his impact is made clear. This is one of the few encyclopedia that I have truly enjoyed re-viewing. I got paid for it as well.

Hiho.

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