



The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana

Jess Nevins

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From detective fiction to historical novels, from well-known authors like Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, to Russian newspaper serials and Chinese martial arts novels, The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana is a truly exhaustive look at every aspect of fantastic literature in the days of Queen Victoria.

The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana Details

Date : Published November 1st 2005 by Monkeybrain

ISBN : 9781932265156

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Format : Hardcover 1009 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Reference, Science Fiction, Steampunk, Historical, Victorian

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From Reader Review The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana for online ebook

Riju Ganguly says

Though no encyclopedia can claim to be truly exhaustive, this fantastic work by Jess Nevins is incredible in its breadth as well as in terms of incisiveness. Despite Nevins's somewhat apologetic note regarding being subjective, it is my opinion that that is the only way by which the Victorian literature can be made vivid enough to overcome the fog and gaslight. This work is magnificent in all aspects. Enjoy it.

Stephen Simpson says

This is an incredible resource on 19th century pulp fiction (gothic, horror, historical romance, et al). I can scarcely imagine the amount of time and energy that went into this work, and it is a very complete reference.

The author makes numerous judgement calls and critical reviews throughout the book (many of which are quite funny), but expressing his opinion so openly may irk some readers.

This book is pretty scarce on the used market (and expensive), but it's well worth it if you're a fan of authors like Doyle, Machen, Scott, Ainsworth, et al and want to find other similar ideas for reading.

Peggy says

The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana is a marvel: a comprehensive reference guide to authors, characters, and works of the fantastic in Victorian times, stuffed to bursting with tidbits and nuggets of information about those folks who laid much of the groundwork for today's literature of the fantastic. 1200 pages, people! And did I mention it's pretty? So very, very pretty.

James M Cleland says

James

Patrick says

Completely awesome. This book will steal months of your life.

Evan says

Probably the most amazing collection of Victorian "pulp" fiction references available. A good reference

book for anyone interested in this time period (or trying to decipher references to this time period).

Paul says

I really like this book and all of stories it references that I had never read or even heard of.

Thomas says

Holy CRAP this book is amazing. Way too much text to really process in a chunk; as a reference book to those interested in Victorian culture, pulp fiction, or any kind of popular literature, it absolutely can't be beat. It absolutely boggles my mind to see the level of scholarship that goes in to a book like this. Introduction by Michael Moorcock gets it extra points.

Landon says

Reading encyclopediae is not normally my bag, but Jess Nevins' masterpiece of genre research begged to be made an exception. Nevins, a research librarian, started out on the web publishing annotations for Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* series, and they were so good, that Moore himself noticed them and wrote forewards for them when they were published. By this time, however, Nevins had also begun casting his net more widely, compiling information on fantastical literature of the Victorian era more generally. Originally housed on a rather primitive website, Nevins eventually edited his tremendous feat of research into a book - *The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana*, a massive tome replete with information not to be found anywhere else except in the primary sources the book references. It's a truly magnificent work, though due to a limited print run and high demand on the secondary market, unobtainable at any reasonable price in hardcopy - I had to read it in Kindle format.

And read it I did; for what is ostensibly a reference work, it is immensely readable. The way in which it achieves that feat, however, also contributes to one of the book's great strengths. The encyclopedia could not possibly have been such a smooth read if it were strictly a collection of characters, or books, or tropes, or any one thing at all, but it is, in fact, a melange - a pleasant melange, but a melange all the same. Sometimes Nevins makes an entry of a character, sometimes a theme or trope, sometimes something else. Sometimes he summarizes the story in which a character appears, sometimes he spends the majority of an entry discussing the subject's role in literary history, and so on. In other words, the entries are varied in nature and substance, and so reading the encyclopedia is not just an endless litany of one similar thing after another. It is, in short, a reference book that can be profitably read from one cover to another (although, given its length, it does take a while).

That, however, is the reason that, as a reference book, it is also a bit dodgy. For instance, in several cases, important and influential works are indexed by a character that appears in them - and not even necessarily by the main character! Despite the fact that the entries are in alphabetical order, there's just no predicting where you should look for a given character, location, or work, a fact that wouldn't be quite so vexing if the book had an index, which, sadly, it does not. Frankly, it's a bit of luck that I was forced to buy it in Kindle format, as I can, at least, search the document for keywords. I would hate to imagine trying to actually use the hardcopy version of it as an actual reference book.

There are other problems with the book. For instance, Nevins ranges well beyond fantastical literature of the period, sweeping in genre works of all kinds, including Westerns and detective fiction, but because of his expanded focus, Nevins' choices are necessarily eclectic. However, this concession allows Nevins to situate his observations about the literature of the period (even the cheap, disposable literature) in the larger context of seminal works. Again, this makes the book more readable at the expense of its usefulness as a reference.

In the end, I have no idea precisely how to evaluate this book. It is not exactly a reference work; rather, to the extent that it is one, it's a poor one. But to the extent that it isn't, it's an excellent... whatever it is. Despite its resemblance to an encyclopedia, the work is *sui generis*. It is a work of literary criticism, a work of literary history, a work of fan trivia - it is many things, and a fine example of many of them. What it is not an excellent example of is, strangely, an encyclopedia. It's not a terrible one, mind you, but to approach it solely as a reference work is to miss its many strengths.

Joseph Teller says

Hard to find now, I was lucky to be able to get a copy when it first came out. This is THE reference work to have on the subject of Victorian Authors, their books and their characters in the realm of fantastic fiction.

Emily says

Ah, Jess. How I do crush on thee!

The perfect reference source for a dorky Victorianist.

Thanks to Robert for sending this my way.

Rustin Parr says

Really effin' love this book. Great info on a lot of great characters. Complaints would be the amount of space given to some characters over others and an index without page numbers. Its statedly written in a personal opinion matter which is actually preferable and engaging for my kind of reading - it reads more like a conversation with or lecture by Nevins as opposed to a collection of dry summaries.

Charles Prepolec says

Jess Nevins' mammoth survey of Victorian popular fiction is a hugely entertaining and handy tome for anyone with more than a passing interest in the era and its bewildering array of literary heroes and villains. As the title suggests this is in fact a straightforward encyclopedia, featuring listings and write-ups summarizing background, explaining character traits, etc...for hundreds of characters, ranging from the obvious to the obscure. Perhaps a bit less objective than I'd like, with Nevins' injecting a strongly personal bias to some listings, it still proves to be highly useful and vastly entertaining. Sherlock Holmes is, of course, given a fair bit of coverage, roughly three plus pages, with further separate entries for other Arthur Conan

Doyle characters including Irene Adler, Edward Bellingham, Jack Brocket, Micah Clarke, Brigadier Gerard, Sir Nigel Loring, Professor Moriarty, Professor Van Baumgarten and Duncan Warner. Well worth the expense and perfect for either extended reading or to dip into here and there as time and interest require. Highly recommended to Sherlockians and students of the Victorian pop literature scene alike!

Cleolinda says

A thick, beautiful, well-researched comprehensive look at British and European sci-fi, pulp and fantasy in the Victorian era. If you're the least bit interested in any of those, pick it up.

Lori Holuta says

This book is big. Really big. Vastly and hugely big. You may think it's a long way down to the chemists, but that's peanuts compared to The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana. I've looked up so many entries and each time I do, I find myself wandering about to other random entries. Cracking into this book requires time (and a wheelbarrow), but it's time well spent. Rather like wandering through an information maze and finding little prizes at the end of the dead-stops throughout. Jess knows his stuff, and now thanks to his encyclopedia, so do I.
