



The Magicians and Mrs. Quent

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Raised in a genteel but impoverished household, Ivy Lockwell, eldest of three daughters, is desperate to save her father, a former magician, from the madness that has overwhelmed him and finds the key to saving both him and the entire land from darkness lies in the secrets she uncovers while serving as governess to the wards of the enigmatic Mr. Quent. A first novel. 30,000 first printing.

The Magicians and Mrs. Quent Details

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Author : Galen Beckett

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colleen the convivial curmudgeon says

"Thus, while people regarded both of them well enough, people also tended to leave well enough alone." ~ pg. 5

"The universities are nothing but breeding grounds for agitators and anarchists - that is to say, men who lack proper opinions." ~ pg. 23

"A saber might be stopped by a shield. A bullet might be dodged by a stroke of luck. But you can't dodge a word. If one is flung at you, it will hit its mark unerringly. No, Garritt, there's nothing in the world more dangerous than talk." ~ pg. 76

Take 'Pride & Prejudice', 'Jane Eyre', mix it in a stew, throw in some magic elements with semi-typical male vs. female dichotomies, and you might come out with this story.

I didn't mind the weird change from third person omniscient, to first person particular, and back to third person - perhaps because I was aware of it beforehand. My biggest complaint was that Ivy seemed so different, in some ways, from the first to the second part - particularly in relation to Clarette. Here is a fanciful girl, saying strange things, and Ivy gets angry with her for lying - but considering how patient she is with her sister Rose, it didn't really make a lot of sense to me. I suppose we are meant to take that the atmosphere of the house is affecting her, as we are told this many times, but it just seemed out of character.

As others have said, I wish they would've developed the relationship between Ivy and Mr. Quent some more (not to mention not sort of giving away that particular plot point in the name of the title). I also wish we would've seen more of the sisters, particularly in the second part, which became impossible with the first person narrative. (Not to mention the fact that it seemed really odd that after so much time is spent learning to like Mr. Quent, he's pretty much absent from the entire third half, except via a few letters and then at the end.) And, lastly, the bits with Eldyn and his sister, while sometimes interesting, seemed mostly fragmentary and not really tied into the rest of the story. I mean, I know it was, what with Westen's appearance and fate and how that effects the rest, but those parts just didn't grab my fancy, and I waited to get back to the others.

Oh, and the weird varying lengths of days didn't bother me that much. Yes, it's scientifically impossible and didn't make any sense, but this being fantasy, I sort of just went with the "blame it on magic" and left it at that. It's amazing what I can let go when I'm enjoying a story - a point which might irritate the hell out of me otherwise.

Ah well... I would say this book is more romance than magic, with the magic bits strewn throughout the first two parts only really coming together in the last, rushed part - but I got attached to the characters, and am interested in what will happen next, so I'll definitely be picking up the sequel.

Nicole Pramik says

To be honest, it took me three readings (not in a row) to finally get into *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent*. It's not that it's a terrible book. It's a good, pleasant read. But it has some missing pieces that, had they been filled in, would have made the novel more enjoyable as a whole.

First, I actually liked the way the story lines of Ivy, Raffredy, and Garrett intersected though it made it a bit of a stretch to keep track of at times. Along those lines though, the novel unfolds slowly. Very...very...slowly...

...which may or may not be a bad thing. It's not bad if it forces you to pay attention and holds your interest, but the pace works against the story in that it takes too long to delve into the plot.

The characters' static development is the second missing piece. The main characters, male and female alike, possess little to no flaws, so the good guys and gals remain good (and never really have to make hard moral decisions) and the bad guys are bad without any real justification for their behavior. Ivy herself had the potential to make a great leading lady and, to be fair, she's smart, resourceful, isn't a man-hater, and reacts bravely in the face of danger. But that's about it. She behaves as expected as the novel's perfect heroine so nothing Ivy did (or didn't do) came as a surprise.

Since this is a fantasy novel, it's only fair to discuss its world-building which, for the most part, is fairly solid (albeit the function and purpose of the umbrals and luminals possessed no logical, scientific possibility or pattern nor do they possess any overt functionality despite their constant occurrence and reference). Altania is derived from some variant of Regency/Victorian London only with magicians running afoot. Probably the biggest issue regarding the magic in the book is why men can work magic and women can't. It isn't a sense of innate ability nor a legally enforced matter. Instead, it seems to be a social assumption. Personally, I would have liked some sort of exposition, however small, as to why Altanian society viewed magic as taboo for women. Doing so would have made some characters' actions more compelling.

Likewise, the magic itself is a bit low-key, so there is no wand-waving, spell-casting, or potion-making.

I know – like, *whaaat?*

But that's not necessarily a negative either since this novel is driven more by its layers of suspense than establishing a rich magical world (like *Harry Potter*). But it does bring up the third missing element. We're given no history regarding the Vigilant Order, which is set up as the chief antagonist though they only overtly appear in the novel's climactic scene. Where did they come from? Who do they like to recruit? What was their mission? These questions didn't have to be addressed in full but some sort of background would have been helpful in seeing the Vigil as a genuine menace.

There is also an ancient mystery surrounding the foreboding Wyrdwood that's built up in the middle of the story yet seemingly dropped in the last half. To be fair, *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* is the first book in a series, so it's possible all of these issues are addressed and developed later on. But since this novel serves as the opening act, I think more background details, at least in terms of setting up basic histories, were needed. As a whole, *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* had much to offer but perhaps bites off a little more than it can chew. These flaws show themselves through plot slackening and multiple character threads that, while they do ultimately lead somewhere, don't present much in terms of deeper character or world development.

From a writing standpoint, *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* is eloquently composed. Beckett does an excellent job staying true to the story's fabricated time period and place, so you don't have characters seemingly plucked from a Regency novel using contemporary slang or referencing modern pop culture artifacts. Though my one issue is the mid-section breakdown: for the first sixteen chapters or so, the story is told in third person. Yet in the middle of the novel, it's related by Ivy in first person. While these portions were interesting and brought in a compelling magical element, I didn't feel they were completely connected to the novel as a whole. In fact, Ivy's section (which I liked the most) could have worked as a stand alone story, especially since the last portion of the novel picks up as if nothing had really happened (other than one character's marriage, which, since the title is a bit of a spoiler, probably won't come as a surprise).

Lastly, it's important to note that for readers who have engaged a great deal of different types of fiction and genres, the novel's inspirations will be almost painfully obvious. *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* makes it no secret that it draws upon the flavor of Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte's works. But maybe a little too much. Throughout the novel, I easily picked up elements from not only Austen's and Bronte's sundry works (*Jane Eyre* in particular) but also Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, Charles Dickens' works, *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, and general Gothic elements. This isn't to say Beckett stole anything, and using genre conventions from Regency and Gothic fiction is fine. But perhaps the literary inspirations influenced the novel too much though not to the extent that *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* is a rip-off. Instead, it's more like looking at a color-by-number painting and glimpsing the numbers beneath the colors: the novel presents an engaging story but the mechanics needed to be better concealed.

Concerning content, language is nearly non-existent (if there were any profanities, they were so infrequent that they were easy to overlook). Regarding violence, while there are some tense moments where characters are threatened or in danger, there are no graphic, gory deaths or scenes of abuse or torture. Lastly, there is no sexual content. One male character is jeered by prostitutes on the street but doesn't banter with them. Rape is vaguely implied as the assumed fate of a character told in flashback, but since nothing is ever explained or confirmed, that idea is left up to the reader's interpretation. (As a side note, some readers suspect Garrett is homosexual though, other than a scene where he cross-dresses in order to disguise himself, nothing stood out as very apparent to me regarding his sexual orientation.) Overall, I sense this novel will best be suited for older teens (16+) and adults.

Overall, *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* is good but not great and borrows too heavily from its sources of inspiration at times. Likewise, its pacing can drag and some of the magical elements seem to be forgotten about (at least as far as this first novel is concerned). *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* is worth picking up if you're a die-hard fantasy fan or if you enjoy quasi-alternative history. But regardless where you fall within the spectrum, it takes a very patient reader to stick with it.

Kit★ says

Oh man, I just finished this book, and I'm going to cry because I don't have the next one. I loved this book! From the first page, where Ivy was walking with her nose in a book, all the way through, I was on a ride. I loved the historical-type setting, set in a country called Altania which has a lot of similarities to Britain, in a time-period similar to Regency or Victorian times. Ivy Lockwell, the main character is the eldest of three sisters, smart, logical, and of course, pretty. Their father, who used to be a magician, seems to be senile. One night, Ivy sees some mysterious cloaked figures come to the door, and her mother turns them away. Well, that sparks a curiosity within Ivy, and she starts wondering what they want, if it has to do with her father's magick, and why he'd lost his mind. Along the way, she makes the acquaintance of two other major

characters, Mr. Dashton Rafferdy, and his friend Mr. Eldyn Garrit. Some parts of the book focus on things the two men are doing. Ivy sort of falls in love with Mr. Rafferdy, a feeling he reciprocates, but due to the differences in their social standings, a match just really isn't proper. After some upheavals in Ivy's home life, she goes to be governess to some children at the request of an old friend of her father's. This second part of the book is told in first person instead of third person like parts 1 and 3, but it didn't bother me at all. I liked having insights into what Ivy was thinking, and the first person perspective fit the gothic sort of feeling of part 2. It is here she meets Mr. Alasdare Quent, her dark and mysterious employer. Here in Heathcrest Hall, Ivy deals with a grumpy housekeeper, a mysterious locked room, and children who swear they see a ghostly white lady outside on the moors calling to them. She learns of the Wyrdwood, the old forest that covered Altania before the Tharosians came and conquered the island. The Wyrdwood is dangerous, it seems to have a life and mind of its own. What patches of it are left in the country are kept behind high stone walls. There's rumor of witches about. She also learns of traitors to the crown who are working to bring down the Assembly and introduce a new ruler, and she finds out Mr. Quent is an inquirer for the crown. After having to rescue the children on a dark stormy night from being lured to the walls around the Wyrdwood, Mr. Quent decides it's safer if the children go live with other relatives. Thinking she's going to be sent back home, without the necessary funds to ensure her family's future, Ivy is quite surprised when Mr. Quent instead proposes marriage, which she accepts. After a dangerous scene with a gang of traitors aided by the witch, Ivy discovers she has some power of her own, being descended from the witches herself. Mr. Quent decides it's safer for her back in the city with her family, and sends her off, while he heads to Torland on more work for the crown, helping out when the Wyrdwood decides to attack, introducing a big part of the plot that continues through the series, as the very land of Altania seems to rise up. The next part of the book goes back to the perspectives of Mr. Garrit, Mr. Rafferdy, and Ivy. After returning to the city, Ivy finds out her father has been consigned to the insane asylum, a fate from which it seems she cannot rescue him from. Then, she is sent a missive from her husband to deliver a message to the lord he works for, who turns out to be none other than Mr. Rafferdy's father, throwing the two of them together again. Through another character who turns out not to be as benevolent as thought, Mr. Rafferdy has discovered his own magickal powers, a skill that comes in handy in this last part of the book. Eldyn has discovered some powers of his own, although of a different sort, and in his parts, helps to take down a really bad dude. Or so I hope. This last section of the book was a fast read, I couldn't put it down. Things raced toward their conclusion, the action was much faster paced than the previous parts of the book, and it was just all-around exciting. The ending definitely leaves way for sequels, and I absolutely am going to get the next one. I'm hoping I get some b-day money next month so I can go and get it. I just loved this book. It blended the historical kind of stuff I like with fantasy aspects, and a little tiny dash of romance. The characters were all excellent, I liked Ivy and her sisters, Mr. Rafferdy was great, especially once he started to take things more seriously. Eldyn's story I definitely want to know more of, and he's a character I'm rooting for. Ah, and I can't forget Mr. Quent. All dark and brooding, and mysterious. I'm glad Ivy loves him, even if she still has some feelings for Rafferdy, it's plain she cares about Mr. Quent deeply. I can not wait to get the next one, and any others that may come after it.

Tiffany Reisz says

Absolutely adored this one. Already ordered the sequel. Very elegant light fantasy + Gothic romance. Highly recommended.

Felicia says

I hate to criticize this book, because I feel like it has a lot of merits. It attempts to mix Jane Austen with epic fantasy in a way that theoretically I would love to...love more.

I think the book has some wonderful aspects and some may enjoy it more than others. It gets very bogged down with world-building, to the detriment of letting the characters breathe and the pages flow. The book inexplicably changes POV in the middle and it seems like a whole different book entirely. I don't quite understand it. I just think that the book wasn't focused enough on what it wanted to be. I think if it had kept SOME of the cliches of EITHER genre it might have settled better into it's skin. It's just too scattered in focus to really glom on and enjoy to it's fullest for me.

I think underneath some of the problems there are GREAT ideas and great concepts and I do believe I will try the next book. I just hope more editing and clarity of characters come through more in the followup.

Mei-Lu says

I think I should start by saying that this is not a book I would ever pick up for myself. I own it because an acquaintance gave me the entire trilogy. Having spent my childhood and teens obsessed with 19th century English novels (either ones that were written in that century or set in it), I am very very particular about fictions which attempt to create a fantasy version of either the Regency or Victorian eras. Any mistakes made in recreating either the language or the complex social interactions will completely prevent me from deriving any enjoyment from reading the book. When an author does this well, I'm absurdly grateful and pleased (I am thinking specifically of Naomi Novik and Susannah Clark); when she does it less well, I become very very cranky. Imagine my reaction, then, when I read this on the flyleaf of this novel:

What if there were a fantastical cause underlying the social constraints and limited choices confronting a heroine in a novel by Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë?

Jane Austen lived most of her life in the 18th century and died during the Regency of George IV. She was a Georgian writer. Charlotte Brontë (I apologize, I can't figure out how to type the umlaut over the e in her name) was born the year before Jane Austen died. She was a Victorian writer. Not only do they come from different eras, they also come from different social and educational backgrounds. Moreover, their writing styles are VERY VERY different. To conflate Jane Austen with Charlotte Brontë simply because they are both English women writers from the 19th century would be almost as bad as to conflate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn with Mikhail Bulgakov simply because they are both Russian male writers who lived in the 20th century. Of course, you can explore any similarities between two writers as a way of discussing common themes across their works, but to merge them into the same category as one another? No.

See? I haven't even started talking about the book and ALREADY I am cranky.

With this novel, Beckett actually proves that Austen and Brontë do not sit comfortably together in the same narrative. In the first part of the novel, Beckett attempts to write like Jane Austen. The first two hundred pages of the book are a socially conscious romantic comedy in which the heroine, Ivy, a middle-class girl, falls in love with Mr. Rafferdy, who is an aristocrat. As much as possible, Beckett apes Jane Austen's prose style and I found it extremely grating. Then, abruptly, circumstances change for the heroine and she moves to a lonely house on the moors. The writing style shifts from third-person omniscient pseudo-Austen to first-person pseudo-Brontë. Ivy is introduced to a new romantic interest who bears more than a passing resemblance to Jane Eyre's Mr. Rochester. Suddenly, instead of existing inside a romantic comedy, we are

now in a gothic mystery. It reminds me of what China Miéville said (to Naomi Novik, in fact) about mashing up genres:

"Just because you add 'awesome' to 'awesome,' doesn't mean you're going to get something twice as awesome. Sometimes you get an abomination."

Thankfully, Beckett only continues this pseudo-Brontëist writing going for another hundred and fifty pages and finally, finally, just writes the rest of the novel. The second and third books of the series are written in a third person omniscient neutral voice that I wish Beckett had applied to the first half of yhr first book as well. Obviously, trying to write like two of the most famous writers in English, while an interesting exercise, is almost calculated to draw unflattering comparisons between your prose and that of the justly more celebrated novelists you are stylistically copying.

Aside from the above issues, all of which were a constant source of annoyance while reading the book, I was mildly entertained by the narrative. I was interested enough to keep on reading but was never really enthralled by the magical world which Beckett has created. In fact, I was made uneasy with the fact that Beckett turned sexual differences (male and female, homosexual and heterosexual) into limits on ways the characters could use magic. Women were witches (they could never perform spells, no matter how hard they tried to), men were magicians (unable to perform the "natural" magic that women can do, but able to use spells), gay men were illusionists (able neither connect to the natural world like women nor to speak spells like men but able to trick the eye with illusions). Simplifying your magical system along sexual lines is ... problematic for me. In fact, I would say that regardless of authorial intent, the world and the book seem MORE sexist than the real conditions under which Austen and Brontë wrote. I will give the book credit for keeping me reading (I don't automatically finish any book just because I've started it) but that is almost the only thing I can give it credit for. The writing style was, well, let us say it failed in its narrative and stylistic objectives; the characters were two-dimensional and often annoying; and the world-building was shallow. I am quite thankful I'm finally writing this review so I can get this book off my desktop and donate it to the local Goodwill. Perhaps someone else will get more pleasure out of it.

P.S. If you know how to type an umlauted character without copying and pasting, I would appreciate it if you told me how in the comments! EDIT: I've figured it out! Thanks!

Julie says

If you took Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Jane Eyre, Lord of the Rings, and Harry Potter and combined elements into one book and in that order, you would have this book. Actually, it is much more original than that sounds, and I confess, I didn't want to put it down, because I couldn't wait to see what happened next. But when I tried to re-tell the storyline, I started laughing because it was so clear where many of the elements could have come from. I would have given this 4 stars, but I was really irritated at several of the conclusions for story lines.

This book is long. It has more than 400 pages, but there is a LOT of type per page. There are also lots of characters to keep track of. In the first part of the book, I almost gave up because there were so many new and unfamiliar names. But I was very impressed with how the author tied all of the characters into one plot and conclusion. They weren't superfluous characters. Everyone played a role.

I also liked the way the author combined Jane Austen type England and fantasy into an alternate world.

My biggest complaint is probably the title because it gave away one of the major plot twists before you got there.

Richard Derus says

Rating: 2* of five

Icky, sappy, treacly romantic claptrap.

Alternative history? Not really. Romance novel with fantasy trappings? Not really. What, then, is this little marvy?

This is what would've happened if Fanny Trollope had lived in the 21st century. That, mes amis, Ain't Good At All.

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Pandora says

The Magicians and Mrs. Quent isn't a terrible story. It comes pretty close, but it does have some (maybe two) redeeming factors. The praise on the back cover is, in my opinion, highly undeserved and frankly misleading. This is hardly a fantasy, and the only bits of gothic romance I found were in the inexplicable second part of the story (the book is divided into three parts). The characters were highly ineffectual and I frankly couldn't bring myself to care about them. This is probably due to Galen Beckett's desire to emulate Jane Austin instead of creating his own style.

The back of The Magicians and Mrs. Quent suggests that the story will be about Ivy Lockwell and a job she takes working for a Mr. Quent. The first 18 pages are about Ivy, there is no mention of Mr. Quent (which isn't necessarily a problem), and then chapter two happens. Chapter two introduces a whole slew of people who are completely removed from the characters the reader met in the previous chapter. This, again, isn't necessarily a problem. The reader trusts that as the plot appears, the reason for these characters will be made clear. Some twenty pages later, the reader hits chapter three, is introduced to another set of characters, there is no plot in sight, and no way to connect anyone. It was at that point I realized the back of the book had lied to me in regards to the story. But I kept reading, thinking it could get better.

It didn't. By the end of part one – the book is divided into three parts – there was only the barest hint of a plot. And if there's one thing that makes me dislike a book more than anything else, it's when there is no plot. It was for that reason I tossed aside Twilight. By the one hundredth page, a reader should really have a solid idea of what the plot is. He should be able to identify protagonists and antagonists, and he should be able to see a conflict. Hints of plot popped up throughout the book in disparagingly short bursts (half a page here, two pages there) but went unaddressed until the very end of the book. Things began unfolding in the last one hundred fifty pages that should have happened in the first fifty. Instead of introducing us to plot in the first three hundred pages of the book, Mr. Beckett wanders his way through the lives of his characters,

leaving the reader to wonder why he should even care.

And you can't even begin to bring yourself to care for the characters. Parts one and three are written in omniscient third person (yes, you read that right; part two isn't written in the same point of view as the other parts and we'll get to that in a minute). This means the reader spends very little time in anyone's head. Usually, authors using third person omniscient will jump from character to character. This isn't a bad thing. Executed properly, the reader gets to connect with each character. There is no connecting to these characters because Mr. Beckett doesn't spend time with anyone. Every line of narration is cut and dry, there is no talk about how a character feels deep down inside, and there's no chance to connect with the characters even in the dialogue. I realize that this story is set in a world modeled after Victorian England, but the characters are too busy talking around themselves to actually say anything.

Those who pick up this book because it's touted as fantasy will be sorely disappointed, despite what Jacqueline Carey has to say about it. Oh, yes, the word magic is thrown about (rather, they call it magick, because spelling it with a k somehow makes it more mystical and exotic, I assume), but with a title like *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* one might expect to see actual magicians in the story. We get a hint that Mr. Rafferdy might possess some magical skill early on in a peek at the plot Mr. Beckett must have let slip out while his back was turned. But nothing comes of that until somewhere around page four hundred. Half the time I was reading, I wondered if there really was magic at all in the story or if they were just referring to paltry parlor tricks. There's nothing wrong with magic being a dying art – as it is in this story. In fact, a lot of fantasy stories use the “Magic is a dying art” trope. There's nothing wrong with it. But if you want to call your story fantasy, you really ought to put more fantasy elements in it. I suppose his attempt to convince readers that he was actually writing a fantasy novel and not a historical about England was to rename the country Altania and change “day” and “night” to “lumenals” and “umberals.”

On the topic of lumenals and umberals, Mr. Beckett, you are making science cry. I understand that, if this is supposed to be fantasy, the readers are supposed to suspend their belief on a number of points. But there is no justification for Mr. Beckett's decision to make days and nights have wildly varying lengths. One luminal can last for 30 hours, followed by an umbral of 6 hours, a luminal of 8 hours, an umbral of 18 hours, and another luminal of 4 hours. This is not possible because planets rotate at consistent speeds. Day and night happens on Earth because our planet rotates, at the equator, at a speed of about 465 miles per second, giving each “side” of the Earth approximate 12 hours of sunlight. If we had one day that lasted 30 hours followed by a night that lasted 15 hours, our planet's speed would have to drop from 465 miles per second to 232.5 miles real damn fast. And everyone on the planet would slam into the nearest wall. Again, I get it: this is supposed to be fantasy (though I think something like that is more of an ass-pull so that Mr. Beckett can say “Look, this really is fantasy, I swear, see, the days and nights are majyck!”) but this is just ridiculous.

At least this story was a gothic romance. Sort of. Honestly, if you've read *Jane Eyre*, don't bother. *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* is divided into three parts. The middle part is, inexplicably, written in first person and may as well be a condensed version *Jane Eyre* with different names. By the end of the section, Ivy is married to Mr. Quent, and damned if Mr. Beckett has done anything to indicate why Ivy is so in love with the man. The first part of the book sets the reader up to think that Ivy will eventually fall in love with and marry Mr. Rafferdy, propriety be damned, because that's the kind of person the reader should suspect Mr. Rafferdy to be. Obviously, this doesn't happen. That's not a problem. There's no reason an author shouldn't make a reader think one thing and then drop a bomb. But with Mr. Rafferdy, Ivy actually has something of a relationship. In spite of never knowing what's going on in a character's head, it becomes clear that Mr. Rafferdy and Ivy are good for each other. They have interesting conversations, they connect. Mr. Beckett goes out of his way to have other characters (and Ivy herself) remind the reader that Ivy and Mr. Rafferdy can't end up together because of societal norms. And this is still okay. Unfortunately, Mr. Beckett also sets

Mr. Rafferdy up as the kind of person who says “the hell with society” and does whatever he wants. But in the end, Mr. Rafferdy is engaged to another woman and Ivy ends up taking a job with Mr. Quent. This around page 200. By the end of part two, Ivy is in love with Mr. Quent, who is around his own home perhaps two hours every six months. They have maybe three conversations throughout part two. But the reader is supposed to accept that these two people who have scarcely talked and have little in common are in love. Sorry, Mr. Beckett, please try again.

There are a lot of things Mr. Beckett did in his story that could have been good. On their own, a lot of moments in his story weren’t bad. They were simply handled poorly. You’ll notice that, more often than not, I noted that a point “wasn’t a bad thing.” And they weren’t. In picking this book apart, it became clear to me that the ideas in the book aren’t bad. But Mr. Beckett’s execution of his ideas was sloppy and his pacing poor. All the problems with his story probably stem from the fact that this is his first novel – or they would have, if Galen Beckett wasn’t a pen name for the poor slob I’ve just blasted out of the water. They also probably stem from the fact that he’s constantly trying to emulate Charlotte Brontë or Jane Austin. Honestly, the last thing any author should do is attempt to emulate someone else’s writing style. Nine times out of ten, you’ll just end up shooting yourself in the foot.

Perhaps we should take Mr. Beckett’s gun away from him now.

Sandi says

I fully admit that this "The Magicians and Mrs. Quent" doesn't really deserve 4 stars. It's flawed, it's badly flawed. However, it really sucked me in and kept me turning pages to find out what happened next. It gave me a brief escape from my mundane existence. What more could one ask?

What I really liked about "The Magicians and Mrs. Quent" was that it wasn't a typical epic-quest fantasy in a pseudo-medieval setting. If you ever wonder what the pseudo-medieval world of the stereotypical fantasy novel would be like in a thousand years, this book answers that. Instead of drawing on our own Dark Ages, it draws on the Victorian era. Although it has been compared to *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, it is not the same. Altania is definitely not Earth. This story has no faeries or elves.

I really liked the characters too. I wish Beckett had developed Ivy's sisters a bit more and had delved more into Ivy and Mr. Quent's relationship. However, the characters and relationships she did develop were engaging.

So, what are the flaws?

1. This world was not believable. Apparently, it is part of a solar system and does travel around a sun. However, the length of the days and nights varies from day to day. The only way Altanians know how many hours of day or night they're going to get is by consulting an almanac. How does that even work?
2. Candles are extremely expensive, but that's what everyone uses for reading and other nighttime activities. However, they do have lamps also. They just rarely use them. Wouldn't it make more sense for them to use the lamps, which are safer and give off more light, than to worry about burning expensive candles?
3. The book is divided into three parts. The second part has a completely different tone and point of view than the first and third parts. It's jarring and doesn't really fit. In fact, the second part is a direct rip-off of *The*

Turn of the Screw by Henry James with quite a lot of Jane Eyre thrown in. According to other reviews, the first part is a direct rip-off of Pride and Prejudice, but I've never read Jane Austen, so I can't comment on that. The third part seemed vaguely Dickensian though. My only issue was with the second part. It didn't offer any real twist on what Bronte and James had done before.

Despite its flaws, "The Magicians and Mrs. Quent is a good read. It doesn't tax the brain too hard and it entertains. There is room for a sequel because there are questions that remain unanswered, but it pretty much wraps up the major plot lines. I'd recommend it to anyone who's looking for something different in light fantasy.

Siria says

The Magicians and Mrs Quent is a fun but ultimately frustrating book, set in an alternate Regency England (called "Altania"—I presume a portmanteau of "Alternate Britannia") where days and nights vary so wildly in length that you can only know how long tomorrow will be by consulting an almanac, the most ancient forests are dangerous and quasi-sentient, and where gentlemen study magic at university. These interesting ideas, however, exist within a pastiche of classic literature—mostly *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Jane Eyre*—so clumsily welded together that at times the book seems more shoddily derivative than an homage.

It also didn't seem as if Beckett had done much reading about late eighteenth/early nineteenth century history outside of those novels, because at times there were such anachronisms of thought, speech and behaviour that I winced. Now, I know the obvious response to that is that this is a fantasy novel set in a fictional world, that it's not *truly* Regency England and perhaps here it's entirely usual for governesses to be sent out to purchase butter for a stately home, for women of the gentry to dress themselves (stays and all, I presume), and for an unmarried man to sit in an unmarried woman's bedroom, amongst other things. Yet in an alternate history novel like this, "our" world always serves as the foundational element, what helps us to make sense of what's going on in the alt-history work and appreciate the differences, and since Beckett's writing betrays no understanding of historical sensibilities, large chunks of the world-building fell flat for me.

Combine this with some terrible pacing and jarring tonal shifts, and *The Magicians and Mrs Quent* is a mediocre-to-okay book that could have been really good if Beckett had had an editor willing to be stern with him. I don't think that I'll be hunting out the sequel.

Sherwood Smith says

In excavating a bookshelf, I discovered several volumes that had slipped behind others. This one managed to go unnoticed for at least half a dozen years.

While this regency-with-magic novel is not as early as *Sorcery and Cecelia* it was published ahead of the spate of current ones, and is exponentially better written, with some clever characters (the one I liked best was the Mr. Collins clone), and a thorough understanding of the bleak underside of regency-era economics and attitudes such as public execution as entertainment.

That's not to say it didn't have problems. Like many in this subgenre, it is too obvious in squashing well-

known tropes from other books (in this case, *Pride and Prejudice*) into an otherwise somewhat bleak story despite the magic, which was not helped by the second half borrowing from *Jane Eyre*--a pairing that emphasized rather than smoothed the piecemeal feel to the story.

Still, it was an enjoyable read, if not a great one.

Trin says

Fascinating and frustrating alt-Victorian fantasy, à la Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell...except really nothing like that at all. Beckett uses two of the most famous 19th century novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*, as a jumping off point for an epic fantasy set in an alternate England in which magic is a common-enough aspiration for lords, but which cannot be (or is forbidden to be?) performed by women. There are some very cool ideas at play here—I love the eerie touch that in this world, days and nights vary wildly in length, leaving room for an extra allotment of time to spend cloaked in unpredictable darkness—but at times Beckett leans too heavily on the works he is paying tribute to.

This is especially true in the middle, Bronte-inspired section; where in the earlier parts of the novel, the characters of Ivy and Rafferdy were clearly the Elizabeth and Darcy stand-ins, at least they had their own personalities and their own relationship that was allowed to develop naturally. When Ivy travels to Heathcrest (har. Get it?) and becomes acquainted with Mr. Quent, their relationship is pretty much glossed over; I think we're supposed to assume they fall in love because Jane and Mr. Rochester do. Nevertheless, the overall mystery—seriously, what is up with magic in this place?—is compelling...and frustratingly, not to be resolved in this volume. So I will definitely be picking up the sequel, first and foremost to find out what the hell is going on, but also because I genuinely like and care about what happens to the characters.

Also, if Garritt does not turn out to be gay for his new actor friend, I will eat my hat. Or, not owning a hat, I will go out and buy one, then eat it. Srsly.

Mariel says

The Magicians and Mrs. Quent is a Frankenstein's monster of a mash-up (not the monster mash where Frankenstein, Dracula and Wolf-man rocked out to kickin' tunes) of Austen, Henry James and the sisters Bronte (maybe a sprinkling or two of some others, just to cash in on the fanbases. Like a boy band personality generator covering all types. Austen is the "cute one", Bronte the "dark one", James the "ugly" one...). If Galen M. Beckett had managed to capture even a little bit of what made those books great, instead of superficial Disney haunted house trappings, it would have been just readable. It's all over the place. I think the varied imitations were because he didn't know what he even wanted to do with his story. Forget style, have a story to tell in the first place! Sadly, I wasn't even interested enough to be pissed off. (I rewarded myself with a tasty snack for managing to finish it at all.)

I know that it's been a while, but I still feel the residual irritation whenever I spy this book displayed in book shops. Tricksy fat hobbits. It's not what it says on the tin.

I've noticed on goodreads that Beckett ghost wrote a 50 Cent novel under a pseudonym. Maybe they could make a sequel to the Ghost Writer, only 50 Cent comes after Beckett in righteous anger for having read his

awful book *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent*. His review would go, "My fifty cents worth is that your book stinks."

Wealhtheow says

I almost gave up on this book. The first fifty or so pages are a pedestrian, awkward attempt at a Regency society novel, with mentions of mysterious magicians shoehorned in. The main character, Ivy, and her family are clearly the Bennets from *Pride and Prejudice*, right down to their grasping cousin Mr. Collins, er, Wyble. The Mr. Darcy stand-in, Mr. Rafferdy, disappointed. But then Rafferdy and Ivy's friendship blossomed, and against my will I found myself drawn into the story. I tore through the rest of it.

It's an oddly disjointed novel. The first 200 pages are P&P, but the next 140 are a spooky retelling of *Jane Eyre*. Even the point-of-view switches to match JE's first person narrative. Some facets of the reworked story work better than the original, at least for a modern audience. The children, for instance, are far more lifelike than Mr. Rochester's ward. Mr. Quent is rather more reasonable than Mr. Rochester, if less gothically charismatic. Then, after the rush through Bronte, the story (and Ivy) is abruptly thrust back into the city. Without P&P to rely on, Ivy and Rafferdy's relationship feels more natural and less forced. There is, moreover, a great deal more magic and action in the last third.

There are two major problems with this book. First, the author's heavy debt to Austen and Bronte. Second, the plot is poorly put together. Beckett is setting us up for a series, or at the very least a sequel, and so he introduces far too many plot points. Eldyn Garritt is a completely unnecessary character. His plot is that he has dealings with one of the rebel leaders and is moreover learning illusion magic. However, the wyldmagic and the rebellion were already part of the Rafferdy/Ivy/Quent storylines; writing in another main character whose connection to the rest is extremely tenuous, and whose addition to the plot is extraneous, is just sloppy. The author threw too much into this novel. Hopefully he'll learn to pare it down in the sequel--and be a bit more original.

I enjoyed this book. In fact, I enjoyed it so much that I stayed up until 5am to finish it. Beckett's magic systems are heady and a touch disturbing; his characters are, if not original, at least well-drawn. I like that the people's rebellion is not a clear case of good vs. evil, and that no magick is without a hidden price. I look forward to the sequel, *The House on Durrow Street*.

Kat Hooper says

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

From the back flap: "What if there were a fantastical cause underlying the social constraints and limited choices confronting a heroine in a novel by Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë? Galen Beckett, ... began *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* to answer that question"

I was excited to receive a copy of *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent*, Galen Beckett's "debut" novel. There's something exciting about a new author -- they're fresh, and when you hold one of their books in your hands (especially a beautiful one like *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent*), you hope that maybe you're about to discover a brand new talent.

Imagine my disappointment when I turned over the title page and read that the copyright to The Magicians and Mrs. Quent belongs to Mark Anthony. I immediately went to both authors' websites. Galen Beckett's talked about his debut novel. Mark Anthony's said (and still says as of 9/22/08):

So what is the new book? Well, not to be too cagey, but that's something I can't answer quite yet. I can tell you that it's not another book in The Last Rune series--that tale, wonderful as it was for me, has come to a close. I can also tell you that the new book is a fantasy. However, it's fairly different than my previous books. So different, in fact, that my publisher has decided to launch the book under a new pen name.

And that's where all the cloak-and-dagger stuff comes in. I've been asked by my publisher not to publicly reveal my alter ego just yet, so as not to spoil the secret. The good news is that I will be able to talk more freely about the new book once it's out. So keep checking back. As soon as I'm at liberty to reveal my other writing identity, you'll see the news right here.

(So, I guess I've just outed Galen Beckett and Mark Anthony.) Despite my disappointment, I still began TMAMQ with anticipation -- Todd really enjoyed the first of The Last Rune novels (though not the second), and I enjoy a 19th century style English novel, so I knew there was potential here. I won't summarize the plot for you, since the publisher's blurb (above) does that nicely.

The first third of the book is almost a re-telling of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, in both style, plot, and character stereotypes. There are three sisters living with their batty mother in a low but genteel house which will transfer to their relative Mr Wyble when the mother dies. Ivy, the eldest, is bookish, intelligent, and rational. Rose is dreamy and strange. Lily is boy crazy and silly. Mr Wyble is a lawyer who is constantly trying to ingratiate himself with people who he thinks are better than him. He says things such as:

While my schedule would have permitted me to pay you a visit around the middle of the month, another opportunity was presented to me, which, I am sure once the particulars are heard, you must judge was the wisest investment of my time. Recently I had the good fortune to be of service to Lady Marsdel, a most noble personage of the highest degree. In her extreme -- dare I say, almost overpowering -- generosity, she invited me to an affair at her house in the New Quarter. There I was happy to make the acquaintance of many remarkable and important persons.

I've read that before -- it's Mr Collins. There are also character analogues to Jane Austen's Mr Wickham, Mr Darcy, Mr Bennett, and Lady Catherine De Bourgh. And In addition to these character and style similarities, there are plot borrowings, too: Ivy gets ill while visiting Lady Marsdel's (Lady Catherine De Bourgh's) house and has to stay for days to recover, Dashton Rafferdy (Mr Darcy) struggles with his feelings for Ivy (Elizabeth Bennett) but knows he can't marry her because of their difference in social status.

Much of the second part of TMAMQ comes from Jane Eyre and the style abruptly changes from light social sarcasm to gothic romance. Ivy goes to be governess to Mr Rochester's -- I mean Mr Quent's -- wards at Heathcrest Hall. A local man accuses her of being a witch. There are strange things happening at the manor and Mr Quent and his housekeeper are keeping secrets (and a secret room). I won't tell you the rest of it so

that I won't spoil the plot in case you haven't read *Jane Eyre* (or in case you missed the title of Mr Beckett's book). Beckett's best drawn character, Eldyn Garritt, and his plot come from Charles Dickens.

Beckett's writing style is not on par with his influencers, but it's very pleasant nonetheless. But much of his plot and his characters, though interesting, were not impressive because I've seen them all before. I understand that his purpose is to write pastiche, but I was hoping for something fresh. There are some engaging elements here, though: ancient patches of forest threaten to rise up and overtake Altania (fantasy England), a group of men plot to overthrow the government and let in a new ruler (it's not clear which side we should be on), the "Ashen" are some sort of aliens who want to suck out everyone's souls, unknown planets are appearing and aligning, Eldyn can wrap himself in shadows, and a mysterious stranger occasionally shows up to give Ivy a clue or encouragement (but I never figured out why he didn't just give her the answers). Perhaps most interesting is that in Ivy's world, days and nights vary in length so that she must consult an almanac if she wants to know how long the night will last (alas, we're given no scientific explanation for that). But none of these fantastical elements seem to fit together -- it feels like they are some random interesting ideas that were thrown in in order to present a fantasy novel in a 19th century style. The ending was wrapped up too quickly and conveniently without much explanation of how these pieces fit. Perhaps they'll all come together in the sequel, but for now I'm left confused.

Mr Beckett can certainly write, and he's got this style down, but I'd like to see him do something original and meaningful -- something that doesn't leave me scratching my head. The back flap of the novel suggests that we're going to learn the "fantastical cause underlying the social constraints and limited choices confronting a heroine in a novel by Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë," but Beckett never answers the question -- he doesn't give us anything new. The "social constraints" that Ivy faces seem to be the same constraints that Jane Bennett and *Jane Eyre* faced: pride and prejudice.

Read more Galen Beckett / Mark Anthony reviews at *Fantasy Literature*

Sarah Mac says

It's difficult to rate this book. Though I quite enjoyed it (and will most definitely be reading the sequels), it does have some flaws...but not the same flaws as other reviews are bent on flogging, at least in my mind.

As far as tone, setting, & style, it's close kin to *Jonathan Strange*, which is a favorite of mine. Also like *Jonathan Strange*, it's long & wordy -- and yes, it builds slowly -- but for someone who likes their fantasy long, wordy, & slow-moving, this is a good thing. Also, though set somewhere that is Not Earth, the author's interpretation of Altania feels so English that it's more historical fantasy than high fantasy.

The plot is complicated. Suffice to say that magicians have placed the groundwork for Altanian society, but now they're dying out. Magic itself is still alive, as Illusionists use it for entertainment purposes, but they're sneered at as impolite company for genteel society. Tendrils of the seven great magical families still remain, though they're buried within dissolute rich-boys who treat their family trees as a curiosity. The women, meanwhile, are powerless to work magic at all...unless, of course, they're witches -- descended from the Druid-like natives who communed with ancient forests of Altania. (Needless to say, having witchery in your blood is taboo.) From this we find our three central characters -- Rafferdy, the dissolute rich-boy of magical lines; Ivy, the witch-blood daughter of an old-but-impoverished family; & Garritt, the struggling clerk unaware of his Illusionist gifts. Throughout the novel we have these characters narrowly missing each other -- sometimes interacting, other times avoidant for society's reasons. In this they mimic the orbit of planets -- a

major motif of the novel -- as each one wanders through their orbit, but gradually aligning as the plot thickens.

From what I've read, the negative reviews seem to be focused on two things: (1) the Austen/Bronte pastiche & (2) the crazy day/night schedule of Altania.

(1) I will grant that the Bronte-esque middle section, though my favorite from a story-telling angle, is jarring. The overall effect is patchworked. But consider that neither Austen nor Bronte was entirely successful in breaking their characters free of proscribed women's roles. They all end up hitched, & they all end up in equal relationships...but *within their isolated marriages*, not within the world at large. Likewise, the author of *Mrs Quent* didn't say he was going to break women's roles free of the hideous chains of history. Rather, he claimed to explore how women's roles might have been proscribed as they were in the original novels -- but with a magical underpinning. Why *could* magic have influenced Jane & Rochester falling in love? How *could* magic have affected one of Austen's impoverished families? The characters in this novel are relatively true to their inspirations, & these same tropes are explored in Mr Beckett's interpretation. Why, then, the spews of hatred if the characters are interacting as in the originals? I don't see the logic.

(2) Yes, I know Altania's irregular day/night schedule is impossible, given the rotation of planets & orbits, etc...but come on. It's a FANTASY novel, y'all. Who cares.

Anyway -- an excellent book. The magical system is cool (esp the Wyrdwood & how it fits into Altanian history). The characters were enjoyable companions (Ivy does tend to be Ms Ultra-Good-Heroine, but she has a sense of humor about it). The humorous quips actually made me smile...which never happens while reading those dullard Regency Romances & their supposed 'witty dialogue.' IMO, this was the book *Cold Magic* wanted to be, had it not splattered to the ground in a belly-flop fail. ~~No lizard people here, thank god.~~

Inara says

The three Lockwell sisters Ivy, Rose and Lily live with their parents at Whitward Street in the city of Invarel a reclusive life. Mr. Lockwell, once a magician has fallen ill, his mind is muddled after a spell has gone wrong, so Ivy, her mother and sisters are forced to take care of themselves and their father. Ivy desperately wants to find a cure for her father, magic-induced illness could be healed by magic --that's her belief. But there's a catch – women can't be magicians, it's forbidden by law and they don't have the power to perform spells. When tragedy strikes Ivy leaves their home to work as a governess at Mr. Quent's house at Heathcrest to support her family with money. Heathcrest is located near the Wyrdwood, an ancient, magical and very dangerous wood and the home of strange creatures and – witches. In former days witches have fought against the intruders (now the inhabitants of Altania) with the help of the power of the earth and the Wyrdwood but they didn't succeed and were defeated by the magicians. During Ivy's stay at Mr. Quent's strange and mysterious things start to happen which lets Ivy fear for her life...

This is one of the most favorite book I've read this year! Set in a fictional world with similarities to regency London and the history of England, enriched with magicians and strange happenings, it got more and more exciting with every page. Interesting subplots like the struggle of Eldyn Garritt to restore his good name and fortune after his father's death and the mistakes he makes to achieve his goal and to give his sister Sashie and himself a better life. Furthermore there is Mr. Rafferdy, son of a Lord, irresponsible, vain and not really interested in his father's affairs who has to come to terms with his power as magician – will he embrace it or follow his old lifestyle? Although all these subplots don't seem to have anything to do with the Lockwells, they are deeply intertwined in the events that follow. Romance, although there, isn't the main part of the

book, but suspense and mystery kept me sitting at the edge of my seat and didn't let me miss it too much. I liked Ivy, she is a strong and capable heroine with a sharp and logical mind – but just too much a little Miss Perfect sometimes. What is a minor fault in my opinion is the unfortunate choice of the title what reduces my rating to 4,5 stars.

If you're looking for a book with mystery, suspense and interesting characters set in a magical world you should give this book a try. I was very intrigued by the plot and can recommend it to people who like to read "gothic" novels.

Of course all mysteries aren't solved at the end of the book and I'm really looking forward to read the second novel in the series "The House on Durrow Street".

Website of the author: <http://www.galenbeckett.com>

Tracey says

In case you haven't seen other reviews, or started the book yourself, one of Galen Beckett's strong influences for *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* is Jane Austen. Right from the first sentence the echoes of Miss Austen are blatant. The three sisters at the heart of the story are reminiscent in a way of the Bennet sisters – although sweet, mild Rose also resonates of Beth March. Then there is introduced Mr. Wyble, who was in another incarnation Mr. Collins.

In case it wasn't obvious, from the back flap: "What if there were a fantastical cause underlying the social constraints and limited choices confronting a heroine in a novel by Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë? Galen Beckett ... began *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* to answer that question" I'm not sure he does this. While Ivy, our heroine, thinks the thought now and then through the book that women cannot perform magic, it seems to be contradicted often (without any distinction being made between some kind of male-specific "magic" and female-specific "witchcraft"). Nothing is ever said to give any reason *why* Ivy "knows" that women can't be wizards. Is it their weak minds? Is it their small hands? Is magic precluded by pregnancy or their unmentionable lunar cycles? Is it literally impossible, or is it simply Not Done? It's never clear, to me at least – and I would think it would be something to be made clear in context. It helps that this is the first of at least three books, but I expected the beginning of a clue.

From the strong scent of *Pride and Prejudice* in the first section, the book proceeds to a heavy flavor of *Jane Eyre* in the second. When it becomes obvious that money is even shorter than she thought (shades of *Sense and Sensibility*), Ivy goes as governess to two small wards of a taciturn, often absent man in a big, lonely, sparsely staffed house ... Yes, of course Mr. Quent = Mr. Rochester – which is a mild surprise, this introduction of a new Hero Prototype, considering that there was something of a Darcy equivalent (Rafferdy) in the first section, even though he turned out to be quite unsuitable to be *the* hero. (He and Garritt were each a bit Darcy and a bit Bingley; they pooled the characteristics and redistributed them in a configuration different from Austen's gentlemen. And Rafferdy got *all* the money.) I had never thought much about Adèle of *Jane Eyre* before, but both she and the children in this book serve little purpose except to bring their governess to the appointed place, to afterward point up aspects of the atmosphere and said governess as required – and then they vanish. Without recourse to the book I don't recall exactly what happened to Adèle at the end of *Jane Eyre*, and I wonder whether the children Ivy watched over will return in the sequels.

Layered over *Jane Eyre* is something more gothic. Having recently experienced *The Turn of the Screw* through Craftlit, I now know that's what it was – a truckload of it, in fact, lifted almost bodily from that book

to this. In place of the two ghosts, though, there is one plus something else: the trees are dangerous and to be avoided, though no one explains why till it's almost too late. (Which seems so strange; Ivy is Not From Around Here, so I would think someone would take the clue that she has no idea about the trees and speak up before she did something stupid.)

About a third of the way through, the book undergoes a drastic change in format and scope as the point of view switches: from multiple third-person points of view following, for the most part, three characters – two of whom are always out and about and doing, to adhering to Ivy for a single first-person epistolary viewpoint, restrained to a large house or, occasionally, a small village. (It switches back again for the third part.) For such extreme changes, the transitions were fairly smooth. It is rare in my experience for two main (POV) characters to disappear as Rafferdy and Garritt did (the only comparison I can think of being LotR after the Breaking of the Fellowship), and it was frustrating for their storylines to be abruptly and unexpectedly lopped off – but there were enough and interesting enough events in the middle, and enough information provided for some of the many mysteries layering the book, that my interest was held.

Something which bothered me throughout the book was the wild variability of "lumenals" and "umbrales", this world's Latinish substitutes for "days" and "nights" (though the word "day" was sometimes used as well). It didn't bother me nearly as much as some reviewers, from what I've seen; I saw one review whose writer was a bit incensed about the complete disregard of all laws of physics. Honestly, that didn't trouble me so much, at first; this is a world with magic, so – well, there you go. But as I continued through the book, and the characters proceeded through nights and days which were long and short and middling with no discernible pattern, which they could predict only with an almanac ... It became a distraction. How can they plan ahead? Are simple things like making an appointment with a dressmaker or to have coffee with a friend, or less simple things like travel, at all possible without an almanac? What if you can't afford one? The week is not a unit of measure that is used, but the month is – so what exactly constitutes a month? Is it so many "days" (each, I take it, being a luminal followed by an umbral), or a set number of hours? Why is the world this way? I was going to ask why no one questions it, but if this is the way it has always been they wouldn't, I suppose; even the children might not wonder why today's period of daylight might be a couple of hours and tomorrow's a dozen or more, and then an eight-hour and then a twenty, since that would be all they had ever known. But they have a working knowledge of planet rotation and orbit – Ivy's father's model of the solar system makes that a moot point. So shouldn't some of these vaunted scientists have answers? It is in a way like "women don't do magic" – it is the way things are, and no one asks why, even though it doesn't make much sense.

I liked the book. I liked the sisters; I liked the mystery of Ivy's father's ailment and the house on Durrow Street. I liked the storylines for Rafferdy and Garritt – some of that surprised me, which is always good. I liked the idea of the debt owed to Victorian and Edwardian literature. It was a certain lack in the writing that kept me at arm's length, and then there was this...

The Magicians and Mrs. Quent:

Ivy: "Know that I respect him, and admire him, and hold him in the highest esteem; that I love him."

I think it was "esteem" that rang the bell –

Sense and Sensibility:

"I do not attempt to deny," said [Elinor], "that I think very highly of him—that I greatly esteem, that I like him."

I wonder how I would have felt about the book a couple of years ago, before I finally read *Jane Eyre* and

Turn of the Screw and reread Jane Austen. I cannot help but wonder how many quotes and near-quotes there are that I simply don't know my Austen and Bronte well enough to catch. There are times when I enjoy a wink and a nod to an old favorite; I've done it myself in my own writing. But here I think the reason it irritated rather than amused was that throughout the whole book there were so *many* characters to whom I could point and identify their Austen or Bronte or James counterpart. This was more than a wink and a nod – this was more than pastiche or homage. This became, for me, a detraction from an otherwise enjoyable book.

Hideous printing error (I hope): "*I laid in my sleigh bed for a long time before sleep came...*" *head-desk* I've grown used to seeing that sort of thing in ebooks, unfortunately; seeing it in ink on paper made me want to yell at someone.

Sarah says

This was both a very good and very pedestrian book. The writing style was excellent - for fans of *Jonathan Strange and Dr. Norell* - it will stand out, because it captures that Edwardian/Victorian British setting of a fantasy English world, but it moves along much faster than the above book.

But at the same time, there are just things that were done so very wrong that irk the reader the more the book goes on. For one, the title gives away some pretty big plot points that any reader with a decent IQ can guess at about a 1/4 through the book. The author was determined, for some reason, to mess with the day/night cycle, assigning random lengths to both (the characters have to consult almanacs daily to determine how long the days and nights will be). Not only does this not add any sufficient depth to the plot - other than allowing certain characters longer to drink - but it also leads people to wonder things like "how the hell do the planets move, anyway?" and "so the plants manage to grow how?"

And then there was a character who was probably gay, but the author wasn't really quite ready to come out and say it. It would be understandable if the character was not ready to say it, but geesh, either may the character gay or don't. You are not freaking JK Rowling.

And the multiple storylines was a bit insane. And of course, they were all pulled together, in some very messy and highly implausible ways.

Including one that would have involved a character completely forgetting everything - including a very traumatic event - in her life, up to the age of 3. Nothing. Not at all. Just poof!

So in the end, more than a bit disappointing, and it started out so promising.
