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Posted on 02 March 2019 By Susanna Clarke

Set In Early Th Century England, Clarke S Novel Introduces Readers To A Group Of Magicians From Whom The Magic Has Departed Enter Mr Norrell, A Misanthropic, Book Hoarding Magician Who Takes Up A Challenge To Prove That Magic Still Exists After Mr Norrell Succeeds At His Ambitious Endeavor, He Takes On A Pupil, The Charismatic Jonathan Strange, And Together They Begin To Restore The Sorry State Of English Magic But A Rift Opens Between These Two Allies, Leading Them To Turn Their Magic On Each Other, And A Darker, Sinister Magic Begins To Reveal ItselfClarke S Ambitious Epic Is Packed With Twists And Turns, As She Leads Readers Through Mysterious Doorways, Down Magical Pathways, And Into Other Worlds Filled With Quirky Characters And Eerie Places, It S Frightening, Moving, And Very Often Witty In Her Stunningly Original And Accomplished First Novel, Susanna Clarke Has Created A Completely Convincing Historical Account Magic S Role In Changing The Course Of History A Work Chock Full Of The Most Fun A Smart Book Has Ever Contained

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JONATHAN STRANGE



Mr NORRELL



by

Susanna Clarke

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The Elfstones of
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Foundation's Edge

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The Blue Sword

Pawn of Prophecy

Howliday Inn

A Pale View of Hills

Queen of Sorcery

The Man From St.
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The Skull Beneath the
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The Dark Wind

10 thoughts on “Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell”



J.G. Keely J.G. Keely says:

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Sigh, just what we need, another revolutionary, unusual fantasy book by an author with a practiced mastery of tone When will authors like Clarke realize that what the fantasy genre needs are pseudo medieval monomyths that sprawl out into fifteen volumes Her magic didn't conveniently solve all of the characters problems, instead, they wasted time thinking through conflicts and then had to solve them by taking action how dull is that The magic was weird, anyways It didn't have a simplistic, internal system to allow it to act as a one for one substitute with technology, it was just all unpredictable and otherworldly and unknowable how can you even call that magic And the characters were overly complicated Instead of acting as recognizable archetypes, they were complex, conflicted, and developed as the story progressed For some reason, they also seemed hesitant to fall back on the default plan of attacking anything that gets in their way, which was probably why this book was so long I guess they just didn't have a strong enough sense of honor to instantly kill anyone who opposed them. And then, instead of having her characters laboriously explain how the world worked to each other, she made brief mentions in footnotes, as if she were writing a history I'm not sure why she made this decision, I often explain to my friends in basic terms how cars and money work in our culture, so it's clear that endless expository dialogue is the most realistic way to inform the reader I mean, I guess you could just have the omniscient narrator tell us everything in detail, that's almost as good. Come to think of it, this book had a lot of history stuff, it was almost like she had read a whole bunch about the period her book was set in, which is such a waste of time, because if that's what I wanted, I'd just read a history book I mean sure, the author could take some vague things from a period, but otherwise they should just treat everything as if it were the modern day

Fevre Dream

A is for Alibi

Space

so it ll make sense Besides, if she had any errors, she could just remind us that it s fiction , so it s all fake anyways and it s pointless to try to make it seem real.I guess she thought she was Jane Austen, or something, gradually building a tonal portrait of the world and revealing the characters through details of action and conversation I don t know why she would try to write like those boring, old, dead authors, they wouldn t have to make us read them in school if they were good.I should have known it was going to be bad when I saw it had footnotes in it, like a textbook or something, but I tried not to read any of them because I didn t want to accidentally learn some stupid fact and then be STUCK with it FOREVER , because I m saving up that brain space to memorize the lineage of the ninth house of the Dragonpriests of Ur, or maybe which incantation can counterspell the splash damage effect of a lesser draconic fireball.So the whole book, I kept waiting for one of the women to be raped or at the very least *threatened* with rape , or maybe enslaved, or for someone to be put in a collar and tortured by a woman in leather, or to be spanked in public as part of some cultural ritual, or to walk through flames while spraying breastmilk everywhere, or some other perfectly normal expression of human sexuality, but don t bother waiting, you ll only be disappointed Really, the only thing that could have made it worse is if it were illustrated by Charles Vess, like the equally hopeless sequel.So yeah, basically this book is WAY TOO LONG I mean, it was totally worth it for me to read the first five twelve hundred page books of the *Dragonkingspell Cycle* it starts to get good at book six , but that s nothing compared to how much it tried my patience to read this book I probably wouldn t have been able to finish it if I didn t need something to read while waiting twelve years for Jeb R.R.R Franzibald to finish book seven.But I guess if you *like* a well researched, historically accurate book that doesn t tell the same, familiar story, doesn t use magic as a plot facilitator,

reads like a Gothic novel, slowly builds the story based on psychologically developed characters, and is obsessed with tone, then this is the book for you Congratulations. Otherwise, you can sit around with me and hope the author of our favorite series doesn't die before finishing vol XVIII of *The Epic Magic Sword of the Undead Dragon Throne Saga Duovigintilogy*, where we will finally discover whether the badass, outcast, swordmaster, dragonrider assassin prince defeats the great evil, once and for all with the help of his trusty albino wolf girlfriend, of course. My Fantasy Book Suggestions

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Kelly Kelly says:

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Without a doubt the best book I have read this year I write that without hesitation and with a beaming smile on my face Incredible Enthralling Amazing The book was over 800 pages long and it did not seem long enough When I finished the book, I immediately turned out the light and tried to drift off to sleep, because I knew nothing else I did that night was going to top the feeling I got after blowing through the last 100 pages like a madwoman I want to start it over again, immediately. The book is like reading Dickens, with the dialogue of Jane Austen, and the best writing of every classic fantasy I've read All at once Clarke manages to pay her homage while being entirely original herself And the pages just keep turning and turning You almost don't notice as 200 pages go by in less than two hours This is a book to devour Again, and again, and again For those who have never been interested in the fantasy genre before, do not be put off It's not even about the fantasy, though of course it is a

major presence and the plot focuses around it History geeks There are three delightful, hilarious appearances by Wellington, George III and Lord Byron, as well as various Cabinet ministers of the time period. The prose is wonderful, dead on Clarke has the ability to shift seamlessly from witty, sarcastic, detached prose and dialogue in the style of Jane Austen or Oscar Wilde

These ladies and gentlemen, visitors to the city of Venice, were excessively pleased with the Campo Santa Maria Formosa They thought the facades of the houses very magnificent they could not praise them highly enough But the sad decay which buildings, bridges and church all displayed seemed to charm them even They were Englishmen and, to them, the decline of other nations was the most natural thing in the world They belonged to a race so blessed with so sensitive an appreciation of its own talents and so doubtful an opinion of any body else s that they would not have been at all surprised to learn that the Venetians themselves had been entirely ignorant of the merits of their own city until Englishmen had come to tell them it was delightful and then shift into lines that would do any fantasy author proud *Spring returned to England Birds followed ploughs Stones were warmed by the sun Rains and winds grew softer, and were fragranced by the scents of the earth and growing things Woods were tinged with a colour so soft, so subtle that it could scarcely be said to be a colour at all It was the idea of a colour as if the trees were dreaming green dreams or thinking green thoughts* Those quotes don't do it justice, they were just ones my eyes came across when I randomly opened pages The writing is just beyond fantastic, to say the least That, on top of an intriguing, well developed, incredibly well researched portrait of England at the time of the Napoleonic wars It manages to cover all the major areas that British literature is known for, all at once, in one book, and do them all justice Clarke is also able to touch on a lot of serious issues that were present in England at the time racial relations, the

problems of a hereditary ruling class. She makes you aware of them as a background, but doesn't push them in your face. It's just another way she's able to make her evocation of the time period that much perfect. I should perhaps have written this review with a greater distance from finishing the novel. But I think I'm justified in doing it now, if only to give an idea of the kind of amazing feeling that the book gives you from reading it and finishing it. Books like this are why I love literature. Read it. End of story finally.

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Jayson Jayson says:

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B 77% Good *Notes* Very slow paced and the ending doesn't justify its length, but characters are strong and it shows flashes of brilliance.

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Eric Eric says:

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I so wanted to like this book. The idea is just wonderful. I was so pleased for a while to be in that world, a historical England. I love the dialogue and descriptions. And I love the idea of magic in an otherwise real setting, as though it were a normal part of our actual world. But it was so frustrating to read after a while. The footnotes, auuuugh, the footnotes. They were cute at first, because the book is written sort of like a history book from that period. But after a while they were just so long and so unrelated to

the main story that they became seriously cumbersome
And just when the story would be getting involved, she d
fast forward 2 years or 10 years and the last part of the
story, though unresolved, would be pretty much forgotten
Boooo The end was annoying, or rather the way the main
characters reacted to it It s fiction, it s fantasy, but when
you re writing about basic human beings who have
otherwise behaved consistently throughout the book, and
then they react to something in a way you know isn t
consistent and isn t how people would act, it pops the
bubble of your suspended disbelief and sort of ruins the
story Another annoying thing is that we keep waiting to
learn about why Mr Norrell acts the way he does, but we
never do learn He s just a pill and that s it That s poor
writing, No motivations for him, no insight into his
character So really he just serves a function in the book
that could have been served by an inanimate
object.Overall the book is just filled with too many things
that seem to have no point It s not that they aren t
interesting by themselves or couldn t have been made
into something wonderful, it s just that they are tossed out
there randomly and not connected to anything In that
way, the cold, dispassionate history book style
disappoints, because what we really want is a story We
want to care about the characters and see resolution of
some kind Booo There will apparently be books set in this
world, but I won t be reading them It s just too much of a
time investment in a seemingly great idea that doesn t
pay off.

Reply



Tiza Tiza says:

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Clarke – Soccerjerseys-wholesale.co

Although *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* turns out to be

a book I dearly love, I'm afraid I can't recommend it to just anyone. Whether you'll like it or not will truly depend on what you expect it to be. If you wish for a fast-paced excitement, then this book is probably not for you.

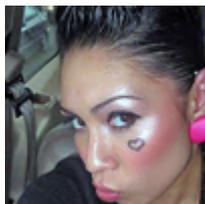
Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell is a blend of meticulously researched historical fiction and imaginative fantasy, sprinkled here and there with biting social comedy, and written in a style similar to Austen's, which is, of course, relevant to the age in which the story takes place, the early years of 19th-century England. The plot mainly focuses on the revival of magic in England, an art that has been long fallen into disuse but still theoretically studied by many. Among these people, two gentlemen who actually practise the art come into the spotlight: the tedious, reclusive Gilbert Norrell and his pupil Jonathan Strange. The story further unfurls with the appearance of a certain silver-haired fairy, Norrell's and Strange's involvements in the Napoleonic Wars, and also the revelation of the prophecy of *The Raven King* in all its mythical grandeur.

JS MN is a long, meandering read that needs to be slowly savored, not to be rushed. I started reading it feeling a little bit wary myself, the first hundred pages being undeniably dragging. But I soon came to a certain point where something just clicked, and from there on it was almost impossible to put it down. This book is over 1000 pages long, and yet, as I close the book in completion, I asked myself how 1000 pages could seemingly be so terribly short. For me, who ended up liking this book, *JS MN* is a true charmer, compelling in all its subtlety, imaginative, witty, and beautifully written.

Clarke has a flair in language use. She employs the right words at all the right moments to make us feel exactly what she intends us to feel, and see exactly what she wants us to see. With this ability at hand, she creates a fine balance of myths, magic, history, warfare, politics, and mundane domestic life. Clarke treats magic as an object of study in the truest sense. Some parts of the book read like an academic essay, with long studious arguments of

why such and such magic can or cannot be done, various citations from the works of great magicians long dead, and insanely lengthy footnotes which people ever so often think as annoying distractions, yet I found them really fun to read She also has a perfect grasp about the age in which her characters are living Thus her writing comes off convincingly like a product of 19th century British literature though it has the virtue of being comprehensible , perfectly written with all the old spellings chuse, sophia, shew, *surprize* Clarke s characterization is definitely one of the best elements in the book The characters, be it the main protagonists or otherwise, are solidly drawn and interesting, as lovable as they are flawed Strange, though not someone who is altogether admirable, is charming and generally likable, and yet narrow minded Norrell, with all his jealousy and peevishness, feels all too human that I couldn t help but sympathise with him even when I didn t want to.A literary merit though this book is, please be warned that not everyone will find it fascinating If you re halfway through the book and it still doesn t pique your interest, put it down then, save your precious time But if you re halfway through and already been absorbed it s very likely you ll be graced with something that stays with you days and weeks after you finished reading it I know it did this for me Definitely one of those rare treats I d be willingly and gladly re read each year.

Reply



Meagan Meagan says:

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Jesus Christ, this book reads like molasses It s like the author took every book from her Brit Lit class and consciously tried to make it wordier and longer than all of

them combined I get the point she wants to make, but I honestly could not get past the second chapter It also was so incredibly pretentious The whole thing has this superior feel, like having a conversation with someone who is absolutely reassured of how much smarter they are than you It left me feeling bored, stupid, depressed and confused, and those are four words that I do not like to associate with reading.If you really want to plow through a novel like this, just go read some Charles Dickens You get used to him after a few pages and you start to like him after the first chapter Clarke, however, never redeems herself.

Reply



Sean Barrs the Bookdragon Sean Barrs

the Bookdragon says:

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Book like this are not written any This feels like it should have been published in the nineteenth century and not because of the obvious setting, but because of the remarkable writing style It is very similar to Austen s that I m sure she might have been delighted by Clarke s work Well, maybe But, either way novelists like this do not exist in this age, unfortunately The writing has the feel of a classic, but the plot has the feel of a thoroughly charming fantasy This is a work of complete magical genius Indeed, she has written it in the pastiche style of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens she has used their language style, narrative techniques and masterful characterisations to create a novel that is a superb work of fantasy If Austen or Dickens strayed away from their realism novels then this is what it could look like Susanna Clarke is an absolute wonderful writer I wish there were writers like her Words, literally, cannot express my

reverence for this novel I simply adore it The plot is incredible Imagine an England in the nineteenth century, not much unlike the real one, that is prosperous, full of gentleman and completely devoid of all magic and fantasy it reeks of realism The inhabitants are offended by the idea of magic being reputable the very thought is inconceivable Magic is not respectable because the streets are infested with street performers and fakes that claim to do magic There are also theoretical magicians who merely study its principals and have never succeeded in the practical side However, there is one man in England who has spent the last forty years buried under a pile of books His name is Mr Norrell, and he is the greatest magician of the age A friendship of necessity Norrell is a bibliophile he is a book hoarder and is quite possible the biggest bookworm that has ever lived I give him a silent bow He has devised his own system of magic that is reputable and gentleman like it is modern magic He keeps his perilous, and beloved, tomes to himself He fears that such deadly books will be misused, but he also wants to be the only man in England that knows their secrets Behind his mask of propriety and professionalism there is a soul that longs for the ancient magic that he detest so vehemently This magic is powered by fate, and demands that two magicians, not one, must restore magic to dreary old England *I have a scholar s love of silence and solitude To sit and pass hour after hour in idle chatter with a roomful of strangers is to me the worst sort of torment* The second magician is called Johnathan Strange, and he becomes Norrell s pupil much to the old man s delight and dismay Where Norrell is cautious, studious, and self conceiting Strange is reckless, open to new knowledge and practical He is eager to push the boundaries of his tutors limited approach to magic he is eager to use the magic Norrel detests He fights in the Napoleonic war to bring magic into high repute whereas his tutor stays in his library doing weather magic to dog the French Strange is young and energetic, but he also is

practical to the needs of his country *Can a magician kill a man by magic* Lord Wellington asked Strange Strange frowned He seemed to dislike the question I suppose a magician might, he admitted, but a gentleman never would It is no wonder then that England prefers Strange to his tutor However, only with his mentor can Strange attempt to restore English magic The two are complete opposites, and only side by side can the opposing magicians restore magic to a dreary and bleak England only together can they bring back the Raven King The relationship between the two men, for me, really elevated this novel to the next level They begin as student and tutor, but end up as equals The dynamics change between the two as student outshines tutor, and threatens to destroy everything he represents

Authenticity I think by setting this is an England that is realistic, and very true to the actual one, Clarke pulls at the heart strings of many a reader I think this has affected so many readers for the same reason the *Harry Potter* series did Clarke, like Rowling, shows us a world that is dry and boring it is infested by those that have no affinity for magic Then underneath it all they both reveal worlds that are enchanting and magical Indeed, most people long for a sense of the fantastic and escape from the mundane realism that is their life Well, at least I do

Clarke, like Rowling, offers a glimpse of a world that is like our own, only better Moreover, the footnotes and magical text references, used by Clarke, help to add further weight to this feeling These make the novel seem academic, and reflect the age in which it was set, they give a sense of actuality behind the fantastical Some of the footnotes are huge, and they do interrupt the narrative However, this is an effective means of delivery the history of such a beautiful world than, for example, having the characters reproduce it verbatim in speech I think it is a much less awkward way, and creates the sense that this world could exist, should exist In addition to this, the structure of the novel reflects the age in which

it represents The novel is divided into three volumes, and towards the end Clarke utilises the hugely popular, and utterly brilliant, epistolary means of storytelling Both demonstrate a norm of novel writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which reflects the novel structure associated with the time The language Clarke uses is akin to the wonderful Jane Austen, and the underline sarcasm, like in Austen s works, is apparent Indeed, Clarke continuously mocks Napoleon Bonaparte I disagree with her assessment of him, however, the opinion she wields reflects that of the English at the time, so in a sense it enhances the feeling afore mentioned I adore this book This book is simply brilliant I don t think I ll ever be able to articulate exactly how wonderful it is If I had magic I could show you, but, alas, I am a mere theoretical magician Seriously though, I get emotional when I think about the sheer excellence of this book I ve read this twice now and in all honesty I can say that I immediately want to read it again Strange and Norrel are two of the most interesting, and well written, characters I ve ever read about They are both right in their arguments, and both wrong It s such a unique and memorable relationship *There is nothing else in magic but the wild thought of the bird as it casts itself into the void There is no creature upon the earth with such potential for magic Even the least of them may fly straight out of this world and come by chance to the Other Lands Where does the wind come from that blows upon your face, that fans the pages of your book Where the harum scarum magic of small wild creatures meets the magic of Man, where the language of the wind and the rain and the trees can be understood, there we will find the Raven King* I could only ever give this book five stars, I d give it if I could Bravo Susanna Clarke This book has quite literally floored me If anybody takes a single recommendation of mine remotely seriously, then take this one because this novel is incredible

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Tadiana ☆Night Owl? Tadiana ☆Night

Owl? says:

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I adore and highly recommend this Regency era fantasy but it definitely isn't everyone's cuppa tea. The bad: It's a doorstopper of a novel, very long and slow paced. The good: It's absolutely brilliant, filled with intricate details, REALLY creative. Give it a shot. Adventures in reading *Jonathan Strange Mr Norrell* with my real life book club also posted on Fantasy Literature Tadiana This book is like a mashup of Jane Austen, or maybe Charles Dickens, and fantasy, with Regency era British magicians and charming, vindictive and devious faeries. It creates an incredibly rich, complex and detailed fantasy world. The Raven King mythology is fantastic. The main plotline of this novel deals with the on and off friendship between two very different magicians: Mr Norrell, who is bookish, stuffy and reclusive, and Jonathan Strange, who's a younger, charming and impetuous person, and their dealings and troubles with Faerie and other magical places and characters, but there are several subplots intricately woven into this tale. It thoughtfully explores some interesting issues that you wouldn't expect, like the difficulties women, servants and minorities have had in making their voices heard. This is a truly unique and inventive novel. It challenged my brain and fascinated me. I adored it. Rest of book club This book is soooo long. Aaand kind of confusing, not to mention slow and boring. Tadiana I love the dry humor. The tongue-in-cheek quasi-scholarly footnotes totally crack me up. Rest of book club Seriously, what is the deal with those bizarre footnotes? They're just weird. Tadiana Imma buy this in hardback and keep it forever. Rest of book club DNF

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Paul Bryant Paul Bryant says:

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If a novel of nearly 900 pages can be summarised in one phrase then Jonathan Strange Mr Norrell may, I think, be described as a stately, sly, witty, intricate, comic retelling of Dracula, with digressions and very little blood Count Dracula takes life from beautiful young ladies, enslaves them, enchants them, enraptures them, steals them away, into his own twilight oops, sorry vampire world they become something other than what they were, undead, not alive yet not dead, creatures which do his bidding the company I work for does something quite similar so it appears to be legal In Jonathan Strange Mr Norrell, a fairy does exactly the same thing, but there s no blood involved, just a little magic In Dracula it takes quite a while before the heroes realise what s happening to their gorgeous young women in both books the gorgeousness is emphasised, I do like that, you know, since they re imaginary why can t they be drop dead too hmm, probably the wrong phrase But compared with Mr Strange and Mr Norrell, the Dracula boys are quick on the uptake Because we re past page 600 before the penny drops in this one THE ARBITRARINESS OF MAGIC One of my problems with this giant enfolding fog of a book is the nature of magic itself In Dracula Van Helsing lays out the rules about vampires for the readers they can do this but they can t do that sunlight, shape shifting silver crosses all of that He later wrote the Observer Book of Vampires Heinemann, 1911 and it s all in there The rules are the rules Many young leary vampires have been struck off for thinking that they were too cool for rules Governing committee You were seen

buying maximum factor sunblock in Superdrug three Saturdays in a row. Young cool vampire Yeah well, my girlfriend wants me to go camping with her family next week. Governing committee Under section 3 subsection 2 paragraph B I hereby strike you off the official list of vampires. YCV But butGC Beat it, kid, don't waste our time This is a serious business But there are no rules for magic at least, none discernable The rule seems to be sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't Mr Strange goes to war to help the English fight Napoleon Boney In Portugal he is able to create good roads where only mud tracks exist for the English Army to march down Later he is able to make magical hands arise from the earth and entangle the French troops but he doesn't do any magic to prevent the English troops being massacred by cannonballs and artillery what, no magical winds available to blow the cannonballs off course But pardon, Mr Strange, elsewhere don't you say that weather magic is the easiest sort to do So whyever not Well, we are not told He never thinks of doing it, never thinks of alleviating the English troops suffering Susanna Clark says in an interview that she wished to show that people's romantic or over optimistic notions of magic were to be disappointed by the unsatisfactoriness of her version of magic I take that argument, it's a good one, but it does not solve the difficulty of arbitrariness and the lack of any rules or boundaries. When anything can happen, and then at some other point, for unknown reasons, the same thing can't happen, the element of tension simply disappears in a cloud of smoke poof As if by magic BIPOLARITYI thought that the villain in this novel was certainly suffering from undiagnosed bipolar disorder Alas that the story took place in the 1810s, when mood stabilising medication had not yet been developed If the gentleman with the thistledown hair had been prescribed Carbamazepine, Lamotrigine or Lithium I am quite sure the whole thing with the ladies would have never happened and the misunderstanding and antagonisms

between him and the two magicians would never have arisen in the first place STYLE It has been said this novel is like Dickens It is not Those who say that have not read Dickens Do not believe them. It is said that this novel is like Jane Austen Okay, with your left eye closed and your right eye squinched up and tilting the novel at a slight angle, then yes, it is But don't say it too loudly or Jane Austen fans might beat you lightly with their lace doileys. PACING The good news the story definitely picks up around page 650 That is the good news. SHOULD YOU READ THIS BOOK For readers thinking about giving this one a go, you should know a few things Half of this novel is quite a bit longer than most other novels, so unless you like slow, laborious build ups this is not the magical equivalent of Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill, intricate fake scholarly footnotes recounting mad details about non-existent books, people, folk tales, all pseudo erudite tomfoolery calculated to flesh out the magical world whilst at the same time giving the reader many large winks along the lines aren't we having some scholarly fun Isn't this a thinking person's hoot unless you like many pages spent fretting about whether Mr Norrell will lend Mr Strange a particular book this will he won't he theme gets a little tiresome, so I'll let you know big plot spoiler *he doesn't* now you can skip those bits unless you like your reading to be languid, leisurely, luxurious, learned, leavened with loopy legerdemain and long, long, long, this may not be the one for you.

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Lyn Lyn says:

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If a writer is going to publish a book this big thousand plus pages then it must be very good, or the readers will

never know about the thousands plus pages beyond the heft as they toss it aside or by the thickness as it is put back on the shelf. This book is that good. Using language correct for the time period Napoleonic Wars era, early 1800s and richly complex characterizations reminiscent of Jane Austen or Charles Dickens, author Susanna Clarke has crafted a gem. It was the winner of and nominated for a host of awards like the Hugo, the Man Booker, Nebula, Locus, Guardian First Book, World Fantasy, Mythopoeic Fantasy, Book Sense and Cena Akademie SFFH. High accolades all and topped off with a gushing quote from none other than Neil Gaiman, who said: "Unquestionably the finest English novel of the fantastic written in the last seventy years." So what is all the fuss about? Clarke has created an alternate history where magic is an expected and realized fact of English history and life. In this reality, a magician king had ruled Northern England for centuries and then disappeared, and two unassuming and scholarly types go their own way in trying to restore magic to England. To create a surprisingly seamless magical realism, Clarke employed the inclusion of or reference to the following: Francisco Goya, Frances Burney, William Beckford, Monk Lewis, Lord Byron, and Ann Radcliffe; publisher John Murray; politicians Lord Castlereagh and George Canning; the Duke of Wellington; and the crazy as a Marsh Hare, King George III. All that and an unnamed faerie king with issues. I will admit here that I went to Wikipedia and searched for the Raven King and John Uskglass and felt like an idiot when I realized she had landed me hook, line and sinker. A brilliant work and a must read for fans of the fantasy genre.

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