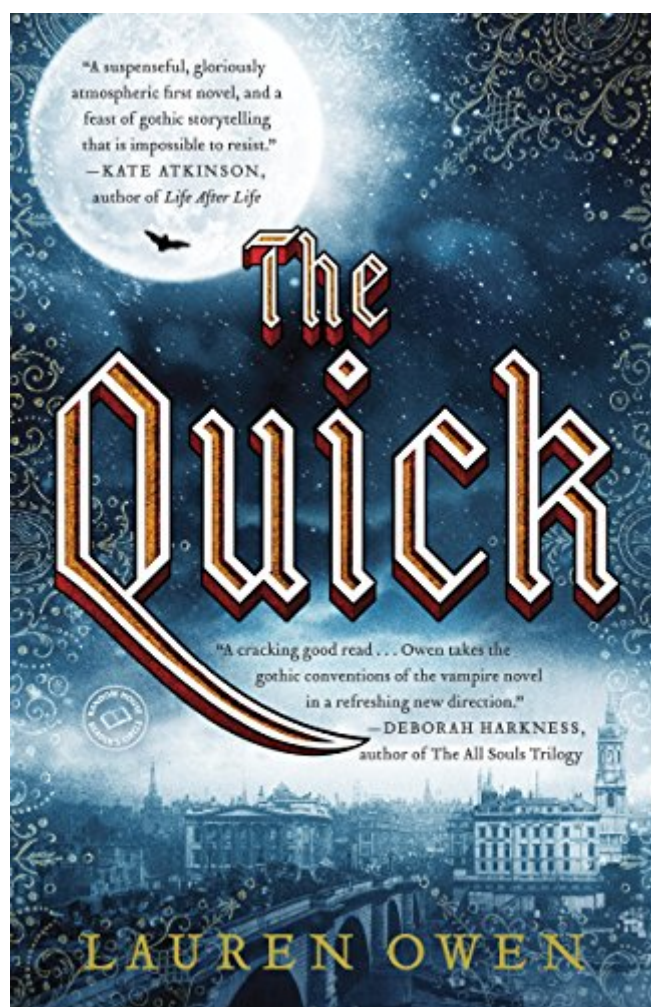


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# The Quick: A Novel



## Synopsis

NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY *SLATE* • Includes an exclusive conversation between Lev Grossman and Lauren Owen For fans of Anne Rice, *The Historian*, and *The Night Circus*, an astonishing debut, a novel of epic scope and suspense that conjures up all the magic and menace of Victorian London • 1892: James Norbury, a shy would-be poet newly down from Oxford, finds lodging with a charming young aristocrat. Through this new friendship, he is introduced to the drawing-rooms of high society and finds love in an unexpected quarter. Then, suddenly, he vanishes without a trace. Alarmed, his sister, Charlotte, sets out from their crumbling country estate determined to find him. In the sinister, labyrinthine London that greets her, she uncovers a hidden, supernatural city populated by unforgettable characters: a female rope walker turned vigilante, a street urchin with a deadly secret, and the chilling *Doctor Knife*. • But the answer to her brother's disappearance ultimately lies within the doors of the exclusive, secretive Aegolius Club, whose predatory members include the most ambitious, and most bloodthirsty, men in England. • In her first novel, Lauren Owen has created a fantastical world that is both beguiling and terrifying. *The Quick* will establish her as one of fiction's most dazzling talents. • Look for special features inside. Join the Random House Reader's Circle for author chats and more. • A suspenseful, gloriously atmospheric first novel, and a feast of gothic storytelling that is impossible to resist. • "Kate Atkinson's a cracking good read . . . Owen takes the gothic conventions of the vampire novel in a refreshing new direction." • "Deborah Harkness, author of *A Discovery of Witches* and *The Book of Life* • a good old-fashioned vampire novel . . . What fun." • "The New York Times Book Review (Editor's Choice) • "The *Quick* is that rare book that reviewers and readers live for: both plot- and character-driven, a stay-up-all-night reading romp. . . . This is elegant, witty, force-of-nature writing." • "The Dallas Morning News • "The book's energy, its wide reach and rich detail make it a confident example of the 'unputdownable' novel." • "The Economist • "A seamless blend of Victorian London and rich imagination." • "Tana French, author of *In the Woods* • "A thrilling tale . . . This book will give you chills even on a hot day." • "Minneapolis Star Tribune • "Stylishly sinister . . . will have you sleeping with the lights on." • "O: The Oprah Magazine • "A sly and glittering addition to the literature of the macabre." • "Hilary Mantel, author of *Wolf Hall* • "A big, sly bucketful of the most tremendous fun . . . [Owen] weaves what's here with what's beyond as easily as J. K. Rowling does." • "Slate • "[An author of] prodigious gifts . . . Owen captures Dickens's London with glee and produces a number of characters Dickens would be happy to call his own." • "Pittsburgh Post-Gazette From the Trade Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I love to read Victorian gothics and count works by the Bronte sisters, Wilkie Collins, etc., in that group, but also recently-written works by authors such as John Harwood, Charles Palliser, Michael Cox and Diane Setterfield, to name a few. I thought that this debut novel by Lauren was going to fit nicely into that category but the addition of a paranormal element that I wasn't expecting turned it into the type of Victorian gothic I usually shun. So I'm glad I didn't know about that aspect of Owen's novel or I would have missed out on a good read. There's a great cast of characters from all walks of life, from the English peerage to the London slums. I suppose the Norbury siblings James and Charlotte could be identified as the main characters, but, quite frankly, I didn't care more for them than I did for anyone else in the novel. Many of the secondaries are far more compelling. At the beginning of the story brother James leaves the crumbling country estate where he was living with his sister to go to London, with aspirations of becoming a poet or playwright. But he vanishes mysteriously and Charlotte, worried about him, goes to London to find out what has happened. There you go. That's all you need to know, except that you must be prepared for all the out-of-the-ordinary people, some of them totally creepy-scary, some of them quite admirable, that

Charlotte meets up with while looking for James. One other thing: Prepare yourself for a bit of an unsettling read and a far from perfect ending. I'm a lover of Happy Endings and also a non-reader of horror/paranormal, yet I found myself enjoying this. It's a fairly long book at more than 500 pages but the pages flew by. I was entertained and horrified and couldn't stop reading.

James and Charlotte are a pair of orphaned siblings who struggled a bit growing up, but seem to be doing well enough, until James mysteriously disappears. Charlotte follows him to London, and discovers many terrifying plot twists. Other people have criticized the writing, but I think the writing style of this author is very impressive. This is a huge book full of carefully crafted sentences. Paragraphs, chapters and sections are sensibly organized. The only chaotic part is the diary of Augustus Mould, which was intentionally vague (pages missing), and told out of time. I thought that was a creative and interesting way to introduce the character. It's like a back flash without the cliché. The diary covers 20 years of back story. You need the back story to make the rest of the book work. So I reject the criticism of the diary, because I thought it was really cool. Augustus Mould is REALLY CREEPY. You don't notice that at first. At first he is just a clerk, but as you read his diary you become more and more shocked by his ruthless approach to his experiments. He is so creepy, you just dread when he shows up at the door. He's worse than a vampire. The vampires are sympathetic characters, compared to Augustus Mould. This isn't light reading. It's a big fat novel that takes a while to read. It is totally worth the effort. Excellent book, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I was hesitant to read *The Quick*. This hesitancy was based on several early reviews from folk who were expecting something else (less?). I'm happy to report I ignored those reviews (kind of) and plowed through this easily and quickly. Owen's writing had my imagination fully engaged - inflamed almost, at times. I'm a sucker for the era (and the super/preternatural worlds) and the vivid descriptions, the compelling plot lines, language Ms. Owen reveals this world through are scintillating and gripping. If this is her first novel, she has begun a career that I can't wait to read my way through!

*THE QUICK* is a gothic novel set in a well rendered Victorian Great Britain. The book begins slowly and is much in the style of its mid 1800's time setting. The protagonist of these early pages who will remain an important character throughout the entire text is James Norbury. James and his sister Charlotte were raised as semi-neglected orphans in a crumbling estate in the North of England. James left his childhood home to attend college and afterwards took rooms in London. There he fell

in love with his roommate a much more outgoing young man named Christopher. A strange misfortune befell the two young men that left Christopher dead and James one of the "undead" (slang term is "undid"). After James is transformed his concerned sister Charlotte comes to London to search for him and enters the world of vampires, their hunters and protectors. There are a lot of characters introduced in THE QUICK and some are not fully developed and difficult to distinguish between without very careful rereading. The book's shifts of time, place and viewpoint are not handled as smoothly as one would hope. To her credit young author Lauren Owen has created a fully realized world for her supernatural beings to inhabit with its own lore, rules and physical realities. The first and last sections of the book are the most engaging with some less intriguing and even tedious reading in between. Clearly defined characters and more straight forward storytelling could have transformed THE QUICK in to an excellent book but as is it is only average.

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