



Millroy the Magician

Paul Theroux

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"Brilliant...Wonderful...Millroy's magic pops out at the reader from the first page."

--John Updike

The New Yorker

"PICARESQUE...ENCHANTING...Theroux is a gifted and versatile tale spinner."

--Time

Fourteen-year-old Jilly Farina was mesmerized by Millroy the Magician at the Barnstable County Fair. After all, he once turned a girl from the audience into a glass of milk and drank her. But when Jilly stepped into the wickerwork coffin during a performance, she had no idea he would transform her dreary life into something truly magical, and a touch bizarre.

For Millroy was no ordinary magician. He could smell the future, and Jilly was going to be part of it. Yet not even Millroy could foresee how far determination and a dream could take him, as he and his new young assistant hit the road--and the airwaves--to save America's unhealthy appetite and floundering soul....

"MAGICAL...[A] funny, dark satire of America's obsessions."

--The New York Times Book Review

"AMAZING...[A] STARTLINGLY ORIGINAL TALE OF PURE MAGIC... that amuses, unnerves, and captivates the reader in a spell of bewilderment, danger and awe....The reader [will] be enthralled."

--The Boston Sunday Herald

Millroy the Magician Details

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Author : Paul Theroux

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From Reader Review Millroy the Magician for online ebook

Lee Gooden says

This was a strange book with a very disturbing ending. The last couple of pages will stay with me forever.

Peter Soutowood says

This is the only Theroux book I couldn't finish. By three-quarters through, I still didn't know what the story was about, didn't understand the odd and two-dimensional characters, and didn't even bother to the end to find out what happened, because I didn't care. A rare miss.

Leah says

Maybe this is a book I can try to read again during the winter. It's slow-paced (which is normally fine) and a bit creepy (also, generally speaking, fine) but I think if you're reading a book like that, one or more of the characters should be engaging in some way or another. For me at this time, I wasn't drawn to a character or the story.

Whitni says

Here's a book about a racist, narcissistic, xenophobic pedophile who kidnaps a troubled young girl by trapping her in a burlap sack, forces her to cross-dress and pretend to be his son, says a bunch of creepy, codependent things to her, and tries to impress her with magic tricks that become increasingly desperate and homicidal so that she'll fall in love with him, while simultaneously founding a cult based on quirky interpretations of the bible used to further his own sense of moral superiority through fanatical scatology and food restrictions. The colorless landscape of this novel is peopled with one-dimensional characters who unanimously fail to ever say anything worthwhile, instead using questionable slang repetitively. Most of the black children exploited by Millroy the cult leader, who have racist names like "Peaches" and "T. Van", routinely use the word "yo" as if it were a complete sentence, while none of them ever say anything even remotely suggestive of reflection or intelligence yet we are to believe that between two of them they can run a restaurant franchise. If you are determined to read this book, be prepared for food analogies for rape, glaring contradictions, abundant child labor, victim-blaming during allegations of child molestation, and several plot points that are just glazed over, such as the oft-repeated declaration that Millroy controls nine of his bodily functions, though the only one he demonstrates is the bodily function that apparently allows people to remove their own hands for entertainment purposes. In spite of his dogmatic dieting he still spends hours in the bathroom, even giving him time to read the bible on the toilet. There are plenty of valid reasons to eat healthy, but doing so only because a magician on television tells you it's in the bible is not one of them. Still however, Jilly, the kidnapped girl, who by the end of the novel is "going on sixteen", which is apparently a totally reasonable age to make out with a young-looking elderly man, falls for him because her fear of him is only slightly less than her fear of being alone. The characters in this novel are terrible and the only reason I continued reading it to the end was in hopes that it ended in a murder suicide. Spoiler: it doesn't.

Oceana2602 says

Another typical case of "Don't judge a book by its cover"...

If you've been following my reviews for a while, you'll know by now that I have a mad love affair with Paul Theroux. (his books, of course. It's totally what I mean to say).

I LOVE Theroux.

No discussion about it. Nothing he can do will convince me otherwise. I hope. OMG I really really hope.

Of course I don't love every single one of his books, which would be asking a bit much, since a) he has written a lot more than most good authors these days, and b) he has written a few things that can clearly be labelled as "I was young or otherwise desperate and needed the money" and c) if even Charles Schulz couldn't be a completely brilliant EVERY single day, we can't really expect it from Theroux either. Actually, I love him even more because of his weaknesses.

Ok, ignore that. And please trust me when I tell you that I'm not a fourteen year old girl with a crush, even though I sound like one...

Anyway, Theroux, books, covers, where were we?

Right, judging a book by its cover. Or not judging it. This one I judged a little bit - I had acquired a copy of Millroy in the form of a black paperback with a sort of esoteric of I don't know what. That plus the title (Magician? I'm not really into all that magic stuff) led to the aforementioned paperback sitting on my bookshelf for quite a few years until I finally convinced myself to read it this year.

And it was absolutely brilliant.

Yes, there is a magician. He may or may not be able to perform "real" magic. That's not what the book is about. The book is actually a fantastically spot-on satirical look on, well, everything - our belief in TV, the supernatural, advertising, eating (and the ridiculous cults we follow in the name of health and goop, uhm, sorry, typo, I meant food), religion... it's absolutely brilliant.

The idea is as brilliant as the execution - at least until the very end. The ending is, well, I'm not going to spoil you, but it is surprising and extreme, and it spoke to me, because I felt that the book needed a bit of an abrupt shock as an end. I was expecting something different, but it worked for me.

This comes highly recommended, it's definitely one of the best books I've read this year.

Jennifer says

One of my all time favorites. I'd hesitate to recommend it to most people I know though. It's an odd, odd little book that for some reason really resonated with me.

Margaret R R. says

With a title like 'Millroy the Magician' I thought it would be a fun book, but ... while it kept me reading, when I got to the end I didn't like it at all. I believe it was meant to portray a love story but what I saw was a middle-aged man who kidnapped a young girl because he was obsessed with her. I would not recommend it.

Judith says

Though I've never truly watched the TV-series "Carnivale", as I found them too scary for the time of day they were broadcasted, this book oozes the same feeling of dark mystery, which is partly why I loved it. Millroy is a magician capable of true magic (liquidizing people and drinking them like milk) and is obsessed with healthy food as eaten in the Bible. He takes 14-year old Jilly along on his travels, and it is through her eyes we see the slightly disturbing story unfold.

Norton Stone says

I could not put this book down, yet as I read the reason was not obvious. Beautifully written but a brilliant exercise in repetition. I became entranced. The book is hypnotic. At the end, the journey I had been on was not completely clear, as if I had emerged from an eon compressed in a 5 minute nap. I can remember it all yet I remain unsure of the purpose. Was Jilly Farina from Marston Mills a wide eyed delusional apostle and Millroy a false prophet? Was Millroy God's son but ultimately imperfect. The broader commentary on religion and the ability of humans to shape it to their needs, destroying the good in it, is excellent, but the tale is told over and over. The theme of diet does get to you in the end, even if it is partly allegorical. I am observing blockages and pursuing open bowels with a new fervour. The final chapters only partly reconcile the doubts about Millroy's intention for Jilly that are manifest from the books beginning. Is Millroy a paedophile? Perhaps it is this uncomfortable line that Theroux walks that is so compelling. Millroy is at once a savior for Jilly but also a potential predator. It is his own internal conflict over his intentions that gives him power? In many ways I have to concede the deeper threads in this book have probably sailed over my head. Worth reading nonetheless.

Stephanie says

It is not often that I am at a loss for words about a particular book. It is even less frequent if I am not sure whether I liked a book or not. It took me about one week to read Millroy, and I primarily read because I wanted to see how the story of Millroy and Jilly would end. I still don't know if I enjoyed this book. The character of Millroy is certainly a complex and fascinating one, but the plot left something to be desired (for me). I wouldn't recommend this one to most readers - it is extremely bizarre and I can't say it was a pleasure read.

Sandra says

Billed as "a funny, dark satire of America's obsessions," and written by the talented Paul Theroux, this book

should have been right up my alley, but quite possibly it is one of the stupidest things I've ever read. A warning label would be helpful: Caution--contains spurious vomiting and other unwarranted redundancies and pointless excesses. What in the heck was this all about? Cannot believe I kept reading this muddled tale to the very end. It did not get better.

Sebastian Bonner says

One of my fave authors. Been reading Theroux since early titles (Saint Jack; Fong and the Indians). This one is a terrific fable, excellent dialogue, nicely paced.

Bill says

For me this is Theroux's funniest book. He takes potshots at all kinds of American icons from pompous religious types, to organic food fanatics, to children's TV. The story can be disturbing at times but if you read it to the end you will be rewarded by some real surprises.

Christine says

I read this for a book club...blech! Just. Terrible. I couldn't bring myself to finish it.

Mary says

This book is tricky surprising and so incredibly beautiful. It will give you much to ponder about humanity and the power of belief. I sincerely enjoyed it and could not put it down.
