

The Gypsy Lover

A Novel by Roger Ladd Memmott

REVIEWS

PRÉCIS REVIEW STEEPED IN THOUGHT BOOK NEWS Reviewed by Frances Osborne

"I MUST TELL YOU, IT'S WORTH IT!"

THE GYPSY LOVER is a classic coming of age story, in which a young boy takes a spiritual journey of healing and redemption. Evan has lost his parents: he loses his father two months before he's born and his mother when he is seven. His aunt and uncle, who hate Evan's deceased parents, take him into their home but abuse him badly. Evan leaves his adoptive home in a state of crisis and takes up with a band of outcast gypsies.

The character of Evan, though fairly straightforward, provides a vehicle for the exploration of the role of imagination and pain in life's lesson. Evan, his entire life, has known nothing but pain. His dead parents provide the primary focal point for his pain: his unknown father was a poet and exemplifies a strong "might have been" in Evan's life—to be raised by an intelligent, gifted writer; and his mother, beautiful and graceful, could have provided stability and culture. Instead, Evan is raised by two ignorant abusive people who despise what they cannot ever know.

In the gypsies, Evan discovers his mirror image, a doppelganger, in the form of Armanda, a girl of mixed heritage. She, too, has lost a parent (her mother) and may have been sexually abused by her father. She must reconcile the poetic, wild gypsy side of herself with the knowledge that she is outcast among her own people. Each is an aspect of the other: Armanda is the emotional one seeking knowledge, while Evan is the intellectual one seeking after the spiritual.

No coming of age story would be complete without a sexual element. Evan finds himself attracted to two girls, Armanda and Alta Mae; each represents a different aspect of

womanhood. Armanda is earthy, unpredictable, and highly charged physically. She attracts the sensual, physical side of Evan. Alta Mae, pure and church-going, comes from a good family and represents all the positive aspects of conventional life.

In this journey of spiritual healing, Evan must learn to see outside of himself, to see past his pain. Armanda says it succinctly, as she heals Evan's physical injuries: "Won't nothing heal without pain." And that leads to the point of the crystal ball in the novel: to divine his own nature. Evan's grief over his lost mother and unknown father must subside before he can grow.

In THE GYPSY LOVER Evan is given two strong, healing messages. From the gypsies he learns that life is always "a sad and joyful exchange." It's this bittersweet quality that gives life its special character. One cannot have joy without pain, nor vice versa. One feeds off the other, just as Evan and Armanda fed off each other. From Alta Mae, he learns the supreme lesson of forgiveness and redemption when she tells him that "everything you've experienced and might have done is subject to second thought and any wrongs can be righted through him who saves." In offering Evan a home to call his own and blessing him with forgiveness, Alta Mae gives him what he needs to heal.

The journey to enlightenment is a long one, but the old gypsy crone says it best when she tells Evan: "The imagination is a land of many spirits. It sometimes deceives, it sometimes conceals, it sometimes tricks or creates illusions of the heart. . . It allows us to experience more than we know. And if that source from within is pure, it can foster a greater enlightenment, the imagination can."

THE GYPSY LOVER is an artfully written novel that can be understood on many different levels; it is a book worth reading several times to capture the full flavor of its message of hope, healing and redemption.

A GEMSTONE BOOK. *The Gypsy Lover* may be ordered from Lulu.com, Amazon.com, Xlibris Corporation, and through all major bookstores and bookstore websites. **Latest edition autographed copies may be ordered through the author's website at www.rogermemmot.com.**

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PRÉCIS REVIEW

ROMANCE REVIEWS TODAY

Reviewed by Jan Izatt

Reviewers International Organization (RIO)

Evan has lived most of his life alone in the world as an orphan and different from his peers. After the death of his parents, he was sent to live with his Aunt Missy and Uncle Goose, who resent and mistreat him. He writes in the footsteps of his poet father, penning deep and soul-searching entries in his journal, mixed with typically adolescent and tortured lines. At the age of fifteen, Evan runs away, and fate leads him into a head-on collision with Armanda and her family. Armanda is a gypsy, traveling with her grandmother, her father, and a stolen corpse packed into the back of their camper. The "virgin temptress" as she calls herself, Armanda is the sixteen-year-old daughter of a gypsy and a "gaji," or non-gypsy woman, damning her in the eyes of both worlds, neither of which she belongs to completely. Circumstances lead Evan to join their group, and they take off on a mad cross-country journey.

After the first two days, Evan falls in love with Armanda, calling her the joy and sorrow of his soul. This is an eerie echo of what the gypsies call a sad and joyful exchange, where a person comes into contact with someone in the afterlife. Evan finds himself increasingly drawn into Armanda's way of life, and the gypsy awakens new senses within him, tuning him into his spiritual awareness as well as his desire for her. "O Cowgirl, she."

The suggestion of the supernatural in the events of the story is intriguing. Evan and Armanda both seem to have the gift or curse of second sight. It is suggested that Armanda is her mother's spirit reborn, and to a lesser extent the same is suggested of Evan and his father. Evan glimpses things in the crystal ball, and Armanda's mother appears in the form of a raven. It is difficult to decide when Memmott means to

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interject a mysterious aspect to his story, and when he is showing the projections of a lonely or poetic mind.

This is not a light or humorous book, but is romantic in a tragic way. THE GYPSY LOVER encompasses many issues from finding yourself, first loves and supernatural beliefs, to coming of age, cultural differences and life's first brushes with grief. The prose runs from intoxicatingly poetic to adolescently vulgar, echoing the turbulence in the minds of most people at that age. By turns stunningly beautiful and prosaic, THE GYPSY LOVER is innovative, unequalled, and recommended.

MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW

Book Watch – The Fiction Shelf

Roger Ladd Memmott's THE GYPSY LOVER is the dark, romantic, intrigue-filled saga of Evan Adamson, a fifteen-year-old boy who escapes his abusive home life to cast his lot with three mysterious Gypsy outcasts—a madman, a wise fortune teller, and a captivating young woman. Money swindles, deceit, murder, love, and revenge surround the unlikely group in this complex tale of hard choices and multiple pathways. THE GYPSY LOVER is an enthralling read from cover to cover and enthusiastically recommended.

—Book Watch – The Fiction Shelf

THE EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

Peter Gelfan, Editor

"...a real talent. THE GYPSY LOVER a picaresque coming of age story, rich in plot, romance, tragedy, and theme. The prose, always evocative and graceful, engages the reader for its own sake together with a skillful modulation of atmosphere and suspense."

—Peter Gelfan, *The Editorial Department*

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