



The Paper Man

Gallagher Lawson

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Michael was only 15 when a mysterious accident changed his life forever. He was rebuilt out of paper by his father, and ten years later he is still trapped in the paper version of his teenage body. To escape his stagnant life at home, he runs away to the city by the sea, which promises art and adventure. Instead, Michael discovers the city is tearing at the seams.

With rumors swirling that a militarized north will annex the city, newcomer Michael has more to worry about than the unpredictable seaside weather. After being rescued from a rainstorm by Maiko, an unemployed fur model, Michael's cruel high school sweetheart Mischa suddenly reappears. Michael becomes torn between loyalty to Maiko and Mischa's decadent underground art world. But when he finds himself drawn to the city's most notorious artist, David Doppelmann, Michael begins another dangerous transformation, one that will either lead to uncovering his true self, or destroy him and everyone he cares about.

Part fable, part surrealistic journey, Gallagher Lawson's impressive debut is a gripping narrative about the nature of artistic identity and its tenuous relationship to the greater good, Lawson has created a visionary, allegorical novel of our time.

The Paper Man Details

Date : Published May 19th 2015 by The Unnamed Press (first published May 12th 2015)

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Author : Gallagher Lawson

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From Reader Review The Paper Man for online ebook

Autumn says

3.5 Weird but good.

The Paper Man is an experimental novel about a young man made of paper. If you like magical realism and staring at paintings that are no more than a dot on canvas, you would probably like this. Michael had an accident years ago (the details are vague), after which his father built him a body made of paper. For years he has worked for his family business as an accountant, mostly staying indoors due to his fragile physical circumstances. One day he decides enough is enough and ventures on a bus to the city. In the beginning of the novel, Michael seems to be very young and childlike, both physically and in how he relates to the world. He is vulnerable and naive. He meets a woman named Maiko who saves him from a rainstorm, and builds him a series of masks which allow him to experience life in the city.

As the novel goes on, Michael evolves and gets entangled with a local artist and his model. The series of events involving the four main characters is bizarre and at times a bit much. Added to this, the city is in some political unrest with an outside political party taking things over, rioting in the streets, and so on. For me the political setting of the novel did not work so well and I tended to not worry much about those details as I just wanted to understand what was going on with Michael.

Again, suspend your disbelief and just enjoy this for what it is: a Sunday afternoon, looking at modern art and enjoying the pictures for what they are- even if they are weird. It's an avant garde book, I've never read anything like it. The author definitely infuses significance into the story (some of it a bit heavy handed, hits you over the head with "meaning" over and over again) but for me it was mostly enjoyable just in how odd it was. This would have worked better for me as a long short story or novella, as I felt some parts of it got a little dragged out and I was eager to be done with it by 75% of the way through.

" 'Long ago,' Michael said, 'I had your uncertainty. And I looked to others to validate myself. What you really need to do is take a long look at yourself in the mirror...Don't use others for mirrors. Use your own reflection.' "

David Olsen says

Such a strange and intriguing book. Loved it.

Andrew Batmann says

This was a good idea that was so poorly executed. I think he was trying to go so hard for symbolism that it all became so completely silly. I felt like he was making the book up as he wrote it... so many plot holes and loose ends. I really wanted to love this book and it was SO disappointing

Christopher Alonso says

I'm going to start by saying that this book was one of the weirdest books I've read, and I loved it. There are several themes in this book, but the driving point for me was the search for an identity. Something about it resonated with me, this seeking of validation and self-doubt and eventually coming to a moment where you realize what you didn't know you wanted. If you enjoy an off-center read or are looking for a kick-ass fabulist story, please read this book.

Tonstant Weader says

Sometimes when you read a book and come to the end, all you can do is say "What the hell was that?" That's what I asked after finishing *The Paper Man* by Gallagher Lawson, a book that puts the magic back in magic realism. Michael is the paper man. He was terribly injured in an accident and his father created a paper body for him that he inhabits. It's a fragile body, coming apart at the seams at times, disintegrating into mush when it gets wet. For years, though, his father keeps him safe at home while his brothers mature and become part of the world.

Frustrated and lonely, he runs away to the city, but his escape is interrupted by a dead mermaid in the road. Robbed by a one-eyed man, with his arm torn off, he runs off toward the city, gets caught in the rain and is saturated and dissolving when he is rescued by Maiko, a former fur model who has just lost her job to mannequins. Their symbolism is already getting very deep here.

The city is in turmoil. The North is threatening to annex it, there is rising anti-immigrant hysteria. It's all very disturbing, but vague and undefined. Michael is also quite vague and undefined as his colors have run, his head is bashed in and he's soggy, hardly able to walk on his mushy feet. Maiko sets to fixing him up as best she can, making masks for him. She makes several so he can choose different masks for different moods.

Michael goes to a galley, meets the artist and sees a portrait of the girl he was infatuated with before his accident. Mischa literally tears him apart, telling him he needs to rebuild himself to know what kind of man he wants to be. Doppelmann, the artist, helps him, restoring him to something better than before – a mature man instead of adolescent. Am I off in thinking that Doppelmann's name is significant? As in doppelgänger? Michael does pretend to be Doppelmann, dressing as him and impersonating him.

Doppelmann is the most important person in Michael's transformation. Mischa, though, forces transformation upon him. Maiko, though, accepts him as he is in every incarnation. So obviously, she matters the least to him and is easily abandoned by him more than once. In many ways, he is an ungrateful wretch!

Michael plays many roles, bookkeeper, mannequin, artist's muse and lover, artist and revolutionary icon. But perhaps all the masks have to be stripped away for him to find himself and find who really matters.

I liked *The Paper Man* well enough, though I confess I was rolling my eyes reading Mischa's explanation for why she was tearing Michael apart. Did it have to be quite so literal, quite so obvious? Couldn't Lawson trust us to get it? I can tell this is supposed to be an allegory, but the deeper meaning is elusive. Sure, we tear off our masks and we find ourselves. So this is a story about identity. That is obvious. I am sure there must be something more subtle than that, but wonder what it could be. Is it that masks and anonymity enable us to be

more revolutionary, violent and transgressive? Is this an allegory about society, about art?

The story is fast-paced with lots to make you think about. I think it would be better with fewer big holes, like what motivates the one-eyed man, what's with the mermaid, and why is the window dresser such a jerk. We have these strange insertions (mermaid!) without any real reason. The story is bold enough without the extras. I recommend it if you don't mind a book that does not answer all your questions. If you need the t's crossed and the i's dotted, do not even think about it.

<http://tonstantweaderreviews.wordpress...>

Jason Gordon says

I really liked what this novel had to say about identity. The takeaway: conceiving of being yourself in a static sort of manner amounts to being nothing more than a statue or a piece of art. Your self/character is something ought to be interrogated, destroyed, and rebuilt from the ground up to be appropriate to each changing circumstance or story -- of which there are many throughout one's life.

CeCe Pleasants Adams says

Strange and sad, but hopeful -- this is the story of the masks we put it on and what it means to be human. Micheal is a man made of paper, trying to navigate his way though the world of art, politics and relationships while changing from boy to man with all the confusion and heartbreak associated. Gallagher Lawson builds a world that is weird and magical with fundamental similarities to our own.

Jim says

The Paper Man tells the story of a young man named Michael who leaves the relative comfort and ease of life on a coffee plantation for the big city. But this is no ordinary man or nor is it an ordinary city. On the verge of being occupied by the militarized north, Michael lacks the proper papers to work in the city, which is ironic because Michael is made out of paper. He falls in with a strange crew of artists, models, a mysterious figure out of the past and a dangerous one-eyed man who threaten to literally tear him apart.

Renklikalem says

yazim ve imla hatalarından fırsat bulup da (!) kitaba ve konusuna odaklanabildigimde aradigimi bulamadigim bir kitap oldu kagit adam. yuzeyse bir anlatim. oncesini sonrasini çok da bilemedigimiz, detaylarina vakif olamadigimiz olaylar ve mekanlar. biraz fantastik biraz kafkaesk uslupla yazildigini dusundugum distopik bi roman.

okura merak uyandiran ilginc bi ulkenin kapisini araliyor ama ne yazik ki hem anlatimdan kaynakli oldugunu dusundugum hem ceviriden kaynakli ifade bozukluklari ile yayinevinin sanki hic kontrol edilmemiscesine oldukca cok sayida imla yazim ve noktalama isaretlerine ve hatta mukerrer sayfa basimina kdr son derece amatorce buldugum kitabı yariladigimda alirkenki hevesim coktan balon gibi sonmustu. azmedip bitirdigimdeyse ne yazik ki yine degisen bisey olmadı.

kapak tasarimi ve arka kapak yazisinin bos vaatleri disinda tatmin edici bulamadim. fikir muhtesem ama anlatim kurgu detay olaylar oldukca zayıftı ve hasıl.

Matt says

Really strong debut. Here's a fuller review of it I wrote: <http://literaryequations.blogspot.com....> Read this book!

Robert says

"The Paper Man" does a masterful tightrope walk between allegory and verisimilar narrative as it spools out the tale of an artist making his way in the big city. And while there is certainly a magical, dreamy, and at times nightmarish quality to the story, bringing comparisons to the fantasies of Kafka and Borges, underneath this phantasmagorical façade is a very real humanity with heart beating madly. A remarkable debut, and I'm very much looking forward to more from Lawson in the future.

Brooke says

Loved it! Very unusual and creative if not a bit macabre.

Jonathan says

I got a little hung up in the prose, which tends toward the introspective to a degree I found distracting. There are some lovely descriptive passages, and the idea is great without dominating the story (i.e., it doesn't become totally about its premise).

3/5

Erika says

This was one of the most unusual books I have ever read and I loved it. I mean how often do you read a book where the main character is made of paper and eats shredded newspaper and milk for breakfast? I had a hard time putting it down! A unique way to tell a story that many can relate to- the search for one's identity and place in the world.

