



Manroot

Anne Steinberg

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In the spring of 1939, Katherine Sheahan and her father, the taciturn Irishman Jesse, are looking for work in the isolated tourist town of Castlewood, Missouri, which offers bathing, gambling and adultery. Jesse gets a job as handyman and Katherine as maid at a small hotel. Jesse drinks and neglects his work and eventually disappears, abandoning his daughter. Katherine discovers the ginseng, the manroot, and other secrets of the foothills; she discovers herself as a natural healer who has inherited this gift from her Navajo Indian mother. She also has a special but unwelcome gift. She can communicate with spirits.

Among the hotel's regular clientele is Judge William Reardon, a local hero who metes out justice by day, then drinks the foul taste away at night. Escaping his sterile marriage, he becomes captivated by Katherine. He is like a man reborn. There is a union of like-minded souls, but a dangerous dark magic is released. Can their love survive?

A powerful, haunting novel that explores the powerful themes of identity and destiny, love everlasting and its brutal twin, violence.

Manroot Details

Date : Published March 15th 2014 (first published September 22nd 1994)

ISBN :

Author : Anne Steinberg

Format : Kindle Edition 320 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review Manroot for online ebook

Julie says

Manroot by Anne Steinberg is a 2014 publication, however it should be noted this book was originally published back in 1994 and is now available in digital format.

For me this book got off to a slow start and I just never managed to make a connection with it. It's an odd tale filled with sorrow, pain, violence and very little happiness and as a result I felt completely bummed by the whole experience.

Katherine is of mixed race, her mother a Native American, her father white. After her mother's death, she and her father arrive in Missouri looking for a place to land in the late 1930's. Luckily, Katherine is taken in by a hardened and lonely woman who treats her like a daughter. But, Katherine's life will never ever be a happy one. She is adept at using the healing herbs and traditions taught to her by her mother as well as believing in certain fantastical myths and legends and superstitions passed down to her.

For me a book simply must have some sort of redemption or end on a note that at least leads me to understand the whys and wherefores. This book didn't seem to have a purpose at all and I struggled mightily to get through to the end, only have it leave off on cryptic note. After the struggle to complete the book there was no feeling of closure, nor could I sense a bigger picture in all of it, and it left me feeling truly depressed. I am going with 2 stars on this one mainly because I did finish the book, but it was touch and go. 2 stars

Stephanie H (My Bookish Itinerary) says

(I rate this book somewhere between 2.5 and 3. But decided to round up to 3.)

There are several things that I found interesting about this story, but overall this book is just not a book for me. I liked that the book is different from other books that I have read. And I think that the story is very unique.

The story takes place over a long period of time. Which I found to be different, since most books I read take place over a couple of months rather than several years.

I feel that I struggled with really liking this book because of the affair. And I felt like it was a really big age difference (I might have read it wrong.) And I didn't really like or connect with some of the characters. I didn't like the Judge or his wife. I feel like other than Katherine, the characters I was most interested in had small parts in the story.

Now for the things that I really like about Manroot.

I like the main character: Katherine. I really enjoyed that she is diverse. (Part Navajo Indian) And that there is quite a bit of traditions and beliefs from her culture.

There were a lot of times I really felt for Katherine. I felt like I could connect with her on an emotional level. I might not fully know what she was going through personally, but it didn't keep me from wishing she didn't have to go through some of the stuff she was. She had a lot of struggles and challenges to face.

I liked that the book kept me wondering what would happen next.

I feel like there were a lot of twists and surprises that I didn't see coming. Which kept the book entertaining.

I liked the magical parts of the story. It added another level to the story.

I felt like the story was at times confusing and a little strange (in an interesting way), it kept me wondering what else was going to happen to the characters.

Overall, I found this book to be uniquely entertaining. There were some things that kept me from enjoying the book as much as others have, but I still recommend giving this book a read if you like reading about a diverse main character and enjoy reading books that have magical components.

This review can also be found on my blog: [My Bookish Itinerary](#)

This review was first published on my old blog: [Her Reviews of Books Movies and Everything.](#)

Heather says

Manroot is a story unlike any other story I have read. It is really hard to summarize this book without adding things to it that aren't in the blurb, and I hate spoilers. I'm just going to jump right into my review.

As Manroot progresses, it felt like we were just going along for the ride, learning about the day to day lives of these people. I don't know how else to explain it, it ebbed and flowed, it built gently to the climactic scenes (I'm not saying the scenes were gentle, because there is a lot of harsh things that happen to this girl that should never happen to anyone) and then we come back to from those, gradually building to the next. I know some other reviewers have given this 3 stars because they didn't like the harder scenes, but I felt those scenes were well written without being overly vulgar. While those scenes were hard to read, I've read books where I have had trouble continuing because they are so graphic and almost impossible to get through. In Manroot, I knew these things happened, they weren't glossed over, but I was able to continue reading, not wanting to stop, wanting to see her make it through this and become whole again. I wish I had better words to describe how these scenes felt to me. The flow was just very gentle, even when we skipped ahead to a different time period, it wasn't jarring, it felt right, natural to continue the story on that way.

The paranormal aspect isn't overpowering in this book. It is hinted at off and on until the very end. When I finished the book I thought what in the world did I just read? It's one of those books that leaves you thinking after you close the cover, or swipe to the last page in my case. That feeling of whoa! What just happened there was prevalent as I finished it. I mean, I just read it, I know what happened, but whoa.

I really enjoyed this book. It isn't a Cinderella meets Prince Charming type of story but it will leave you feeling haunted as you come to the end. Did the prince come riding along to save her after all? or was the prince her downfall?

That is something only you will decide after you are done reading and I think each reader will come out of it with their own thoughts on it.

Thank you so much for my copy of Manroot.

Emily Crow says

Actual rating: 3.5

This book got off to a slow start, but it really made up for it by the ending! I especially enjoyed the evocative, dream-like atmosphere and the carefully detailed sense of place. As a warning, though, this novel takes a close look at the darker side of human nature; some of the chapters are downright depressing. But to make up for it, that ending is a humdinger.

Alicia (aka Rozzie) Chamberlain says

I bought this book on Amazon for the great price of \$0.99. I just want to start off by saying that this book is very dark. There may even be things that might offend some people. It really depends on your personal preference. However, I did keep reading no matter what I came up to. Goodreads.com has it listed as 320 pages which usually seems short but this book is very descriptive and it can seem longer. I don't usually mind descriptive books because then you can visualize the world it is in better. You're able to feel the eerie mysteriousness of the whole book.

Katherine is born with mystic healing and an affinity for herbalism which she gets from her mothers' heritage. Her father is a drunk Irishman, and her mother was a Navajo Indian. Her father is sick. He actually rapes his own daughter, eww. Who knows, this takes place in the time of the great depression I guess, who knows what kind of sickos there were. Take it as you want. Anyways, they end up in this town in Missouri, which is where her father abandons her at the Inn she is working at.

This book was spooky and interesting too. I like the spiritual side or the traditions that come across when you are reading. The book follows Katherine during her lifetime and her twins, which is personally weird for me because my mother was a twin until recently. I liked Katherine as a character. Then there were other times where I was so frustrated or emotional. It probably has nothing to do with the character herself, but more so about the things that happen to her or the circumstances of the situation.

If you enjoy reading a book about a different time, and a different world, then this could be the book for you. It's listed at a good price, so try it.

Susan says

What a mysterious cover on the book 'MANROOT' by Anne Steinberg and if that isn't enough to draw you in, the first few chapters will! Although these first couple of chapters are a little slow compared to the rest of the book, they still draw your curiosity about what is going on, not only by the interesting happenings going on but by the sheer talent of the way the author develops the scene and the characters.

The author choose to start the book with what I would consider the 'background' information as it is happening instead of jumping to the main site and circumstances of the story which I found refreshing. By this I mean, (without giving any spoilers) many books start with the main characters already in the setting that the action and the plot starts, any background information you need to know such as where or how they got there is made known by some question being answered by one character. However, in this book what leads up to the main characters being and doing what they are doing is part of the story. The book opens with this happening instead of you just hearing it second hand (so to speak). I'm not saying you are reading everything about the 'background' at the beginning because you don't, you do learn some parts by one

character telling another (or some other way) at the appropriate times and places throughout the book but as the story to begin, you already know the background you need to know to make sense of it as it happened.

This is not a simple story with one plot, it's multilayered and it's all done with relevance to the story's progression until the final outcome. All the characters are developed fully and I love the way it shifts, depending where you are in the story, from one set of prominent characters to another. By this I mean, who I thought was the main character in the beginning of the story is barely mentioned in other parts of the story while other characters I thought were just 'there' ended up being the prominent character of those chapters. This shift may sound a little confusing but I assure you that the way it is written it isn't.

It is a fiction but I don't know what sub-genre to put it in since there is so many it can fit into; romance, paranormal, spiritual, magical, horror, fantasy, violence, and there are more. Although the list seems overwhelming the story isn't and will keep you turning page after page from the beginning to the end. Again, I credit it to the fantastic imagination of the author and her writing talent. Speaking of the end, I never saw all of that coming. Wow! I never thought it would end to that degree of surprise. Excellent!

I received a free copy of this book for my honest review and I wouldn't be giving an honest review if I didn't mention I did have a few problems with the book. At the beginning of the book, something seemed a little 'off' in spots. Certain paragraphs just didn't seem to work with the previous ones and totally interrupted the flow of the story for me. The best way I can describe it is that it seemed like the author had written a few paragraphs and later decided to change them but 'forgot' to change one line or paragraph in there to the new edited version. I found this near the beginning of the book and it was only a few paragraphs (and it could only be "me" and the way I read it) however the formatting/editing/proofreading errors were throughout. Many were simple mistakes but because of the numerous amount of them, it did take away from this fantastic story. There are way too many to mention them all but some examples are; "rub" instead of tub, "goig" instead of going, "bene" instead of been, even Tom (one of the characters) became "Tome." These were things simple proofreading would have corrected and a total shame this brilliant story is marred by such basic errors resulting in me having to drop my rating of this book a star. Despite this, I still recommend this book to adults because it is a fantastic story that will have you turning page after page!

*I received a free copy of this book for my honest review.

Update on 5/14/14: I have been notified by the author that the obvious errors were fixed (kindle edition) so I am changing my review to the 5 stars this fantastic story deserves!

Julie Baswell says

Katherine was born under a bad star. She lost her mother to madness when she was a small child, so she was raised by her father, Jesse. Her grandmother, who was a full-blooded Navajo, instilled in her how to be one with nature. Katherine and her father moved around a lot, mainly because of his drinking and not being able to keep a job. When they happen upon work at a hotel in Castlewood, Katherine was more than happy to put up with the gruff cook and learn everything she could from her. Katherine loved working there and hoped to never leave. But how long will it last before Jesse's drinking is discovered?

This book had a good plot with well-rounded characters. It started a little slow but picked up pretty quick. I liked how the natural ways of the Navajo were woven throughout. It was easy to feel Katherine's loneliness and her feelings of betrayal. Even though she never felt sorry for herself, I couldn't help but feel it for her. I could feel her misery as well. This was an interesting story, and I loved the spooky elements scattered

throughout. I believe that there are things beyond our understanding, and this book was quick to emphasize that.

Star says

Coming to the town of Castlewood, Missouri may have been the best and worst thing to happen to Katherine Sheahan, a girl who is half-Irish and half-Navajo. Her father is a drunk who finally disappears, leaving Katherine to fend for herself. She draws on the teachings of her Navajo mother and grandmother, becoming a healer who can also talk with spirits. She's also the maid at a small hotel who attracts the notice of a prominent judge, William Reardon. Reardon assuages the weight of his job and his disdain for his barren wife in bottles of alcohol and one night, in Katherine. This is the start of a relationship between Katherine and William which ends in an unexpected way. MANROOT is a story of dualities: violence and tenderness, dark and light, endurance and indifference. I felt for Katherine and all she suffered, both at the hands of her father and at the hands of the townspeople. MANROOT is well-written and entrancing, giving a different perspective on the attitudes of a small town over many decades. There are themes may be difficult for some readers, but they are woven well into the fabric of the story. MANROOT is a haunting tale which will capture the imagination.

Shomeret says

Manroot by Anne Steinberg is not a new work. According to the About The Author notes, it was Steinberg's debut novel originally published with acclaim in the UK in 1994. I am reviewing a 2014 edition of this novel. I received it as a gift from the author in return for an honest review.

The cover has been praised as being atmospheric. It is indeed, but if this cover had been the only thing I knew about Manroot before I read it, I would have assumed that the book took place in the vicinity of some haunted Louisiana bayou. I would have been wrong. The events of Manroot take place in the Ozarks over the course of a thirty year period beginning in 1939. Steinberg fast forwards from the 1940's to the 1960's which allows her to display social change and radical differences in values. That's why I shelved it on Goodreads as historical fiction. It isn't historical in the sense of dealing directly with major historical events, but it does describe the way people lived and thought in two distinct eras.

Others have shelved and reviewed this book as a romance. When I look at the predominant content of Manroot, I don't have that impression. There was a brief romantic interlude which reminded me very much of the similar interlude that took place between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne, but the consequences were much worse for Manroot's protagonist Katherine Sheahan. She was a despised "half-breed" who was already stigmatized before she fell in love with a married man.

From the perspective of 21st century readers, it is difficult to understand how Katherine managed to pick herself up and go on with her life after the terrible events that transpire in the town where she had her short-lived romance. We wonder why she isn't angry or paralyzed by trauma. The answer is that both responses would have been luxuries in her situation, and Katherine was a survivor. Survival mattered more to her than justice. She was also a gifted healer who was fully capable of healing herself.

I agree with those reviewers who really liked the herbalism aspect, but it's not a source of high drama. No

one wanted to draw and quarter Katherine for providing an alternative to the treatments of medical doctors. In fact, her skills in this area are the main reason why she was accepted. I especially enjoyed seeing the increased interest in her herbalism in the 1960's.

The source of Katherine's herbal knowledge was her Navajo grandmother who isn't really shown in the novel, but she may have been like the Navajo herbalist elders of the Plant Watchers Society in the Aimee and David Thurlo mystery, *Plant Them Deep*.

The trouble is that Katherine's behavior is contrary to the beliefs of traditional Navajos. Those who have read Tony Hillerman and the Thurlos are aware that traditional Navajos avoid contact with the spirits of the dead who are called chindi. Let's just say that avoidance isn't Katherine's strategy. It seems likely that this could be offensive to some Navajo readers, but spirits provide the paranormal aspect of the novel. The paranormal content doesn't become dominant until fairly late in *Manroot*.

Skeptics who are determined to find an alternative explanation for the resolution of this novel can probably find one. Yet if we accept Katherine's version, then it raises a number of questions. Should we judge actions by their consequences, or are there actions that are always wrong regardless of their context? Could Katherine have deceived herself into thinking her actions were justified? Are those who considered Katherine insane correct? I leave these matters up to the individual reader.

This book is full of both darkness and light. I found it absorbing, well-written and troubling. I don't recommend *Manroot* to people who prefer comfortable reading that doesn't ask disturbing questions. I do recommend it to people who like their fiction to be memorable.

Sharon Xuereb says

To see this and my other reviews visit Sharon's Book Nook! Blog.

I was provided a with a copy of this book in return for an honest review

This is one of those books that will never be "out of date". It is definitely be a tale that will last through the ages.

Beautifully written tale of romance, magic, violence and survival that will bring you joy and break your heart all within its 320 pages.

It starts off slow and you wonder if anything is going to happen and then all of a sudden this book takes off and it completely captivates you.

There are a lot of likeable and relatable characters in this book Katherine in particular. The author has developed her beautifully and she is portrayed as a strong woman, even though she has endured a tough upbringing and introduction into womanhood. Katherine is the victim of some cruel acts but she gets past them and proves to be a strong and very caring woman to those around her. Katherine's love interest, Judge William Reardon is an important man and realises that even though in his world it is inappropriate to love a woman such as Katherine he does so anyway and we see a softer side of him when he's with her. They have a very sweet and tender connection.

There are lots of Navajo Indian traditions and herbal remedies in this book and those aspects make the

spiritual side a fascinating read.

It's a story that stays with you long after it's finished and if you enjoy stories with magic, romance, spirituality, violence and survival then you will enjoy this book.

Great read 5 stars!

Cheryl says

Filled with mystery and tales of love

This was quite a strange story. Taking place during a different time and era. Marrying one ethnicity with another creating a child that is part mystical as well as a product of her time. This story carries her from the death of her mother to the trials of being raised by a poor uneducated father who takes her from one town to the next looking for work. Young Katherine is taken in by a woman and sort of growing up in a hotel that sometimes seems like a weekend brothel. The story takes an interesting turn as Katherine becomes a woman and somewhat of a holistic doctor type along with her magical Native American heritage. Don't miss this interesting novel.

Stephanie Lasley says

This story is filled with Navajo myths and superstitions, light and dark magic, secrets, lies, violence and loneliness.

As a young girl, Katherine loved spending time with her Navajo grandmother. Katherine realized early on that she was different. She had the ability to communicate with animals. Her grandmother became deeply concerned when Katherine shared this information with her. The Navajo people believe this ability was a dark gift and anyone that possessed this ability was born under an unlucky star. Her grandmother, wanting to protect her, immediately started teaching her magic.

Even though Katherine's father was an Irishman, the Navaho blood ran deep within her. As she grew older Katherine found she had a rare and natural talent with herbs. She could easily find and combine the right herbs to develop cures for many types of ailments.

Throughout her life Katherine was a giver. She was always helping people and animals. Even though her methods were unconventional her heart was filled with goodness. Unfortunately the kindness she gave was not often returned. Katherine lived a sad, sometimes violent and extremely lonely existence. I was heartbroken throughout the book at the atrocities she had to endure.

The character development in this well written story was phenomenal. It was so good at times; I had to put the book down and walk away for awhile because I could hardly contain my anger toward the people that deeply hurt Katherine. I was so hoping the judge or his sons would show her the respect she deserved but sadly the ending made me weep.

Stephanie Lasley, from The Kindle Book Review

The Kindle Book Review received a free copy of this book for an independent, fair, and honest review. We are not associated with the author or Amazon.

Cathy Ryan says

4.5 stars

This is a multi-layered story combining magic, fantasy, mysticism, darkness and romance woven together so skilfully into a tale that shocked, saddened and took me by surprise. At it's heart is a strong and resolute woman, Katherine, a memorable and compelling character who life treated with more than her fair share of tragedy.

The prologue sets the scene, immediately giving a sense of the intriguing story to come...

From the evocative book cover through to the last page I found a haunting tale awash with emotional highs and lows. Two of the most complex characters, Katherine and William, are the catalysts that shape the progression of events and even when they are not the main focus their impact is evident. All the characters are written wonderfully and the deeper the story pulled me in the more I wanted to know the outcome. Katherine's Native American heritage and traditions combined with her instinctive knowledge of herbs and how best to utilise them is fascinating and an integral part of the story.

The epilogue was completely unexpected and inexplicable, I was left wondering if history was going to repeat itself. A very well written and descriptive book.

Tracy Tolkien says

I loved this book. It has the classic storyteller voice which one loved in older authors like Steinbeck but has disappeared from so many books today. I really could "hear" an actual voice when I was reading Manroot. The concepts are so interesting and genre defying. There is a love story, and occult story, and family saga type story. And wonderful information about the healing power of herbs and basically just the whole alternative health scene. You really root for these characters. They come so close... I totally suggest that you read this book if you like great storytelling told in gorgeous prose. The first 30 pages are a bit slow but so vivid...after that the plot REALLY takes off!!!

Mary Maddox says

In Manroot Anne Steinberg tells the tragic story of Katherine, who inherits the gift of magic from her Native American mother and nothing but heartache from her abusive white father. After her mother's death Katherine and her father travel from the Southwest US to a small town in Missouri, where they find work at a tourist hotel. There Katherine falls in love with a local judge who hangs out at the hotel with his cronies.

She begins collecting items connected to the judge—a cigarette butt, one of his cuff links, a few strands of his hair, and a man-shaped ginseng root (the manroot of the title)—negligible things, but she believes their magic binds him to her. For a brief time the couple is happy even though the judge refuses to leave his spoiled, childless wife. Then the magical items are discarded when Katherine's room is repainted. Distraught, she behaves in ways that alienate her lover.

At this point in Manroot I wondered if Katherine's belief in magic is supposed to be a delusion, since her reaction to the loss rather than the loss itself triggers the chain of events leading to her ruin and threatening her sanity. Later events show the magic is quite real. Just not altogether under her control.

Read the rest on my blog, <http://www.ancientchildren.com/anne-s...>
