



The Memory Painter

Gwendolyn Womack

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Two lovers who have traveled across time. A team of scientists at the cutting edge of memory research. A miracle drug that unlocks an ancient mystery.

Bryan Pierce is an internationally famous artist whose paintings have dazzled the world. But there's a secret to his success: Every canvas is inspired by an unusually vivid dream. When Bryan awakes, he possesses extraordinary new skills...like the ability to speak obscure languages and an inexplicable genius for chess. All his life, he has wondered if his dreams are recollections, if he is re-experiencing other people's lives.

Linz Jacobs is a brilliant neurogeneticist, absorbed in decoding the genes that help the brain make memories, until she is confronted with an exact rendering of a recurring nightmare at one of Bryan's shows. She tracks down the elusive artist, and their meeting triggers Bryan's most powerful dream yet: visions of a team of scientists who, on the verge of discovering a cure for Alzheimer's, died in a lab explosion decades ago.

As Bryan becomes obsessed with the mysterious circumstances surrounding the scientists' deaths, his dreams begin to reveal what happened at the lab, as well as a deeper mystery that may lead all the way to ancient Egypt. Together, Bryan and Linz start to discern a pattern. But a deadly enemy watches their every move, and he will stop at nothing to ensure that the past stays buried.

A taut thriller and a timeless love story spanning six continents and 10,000 years of history, *The Memory Painter* by Gwendolyn Womack is a riveting debut novel unlike any you've ever read.

The Memory Painter Details

Date : Published April 28th 2015 by Picador

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Author : Gwendolyn Womack

Format : Hardcover 332 pages

Genre : Fiction, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Time Travel, Mystery

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From Reader Review The Memory Painter for online ebook

Sulaf Farhat says

Seriously?! Seriously!! This has turned from such a promising, interesting premise, into the most ridiculous and juvenile "love story" I've ever come across! Two stars for the amazing premise that never came to fruition.

Miriam says

The concept in the beginning, which seemed closer to science fiction, was quite interesting. As the plot progressed I started to feel like it couldn't make sense even with suspension of disbelief, but it actually came together better than I expected, albeit slightly different than I had been thinking.

I don't usually enjoy historical flashbacks, but these functioned more like short stories, and ended up being entirely relevant to the plot.

If you would prefer a drug-free approach to recalling your past lives, there are also classes:

Alex Dolan says

The premise hooked me immediately. As the son of two painters, and a New England native (the book is set around Boston), I just tore through *The Memory Painter*.

At the onset, I expected a novel like *Bel Canto* that showcased the power of art, mixed with a love story that bounced through time like *The Time Traveler's Wife*. What delights me about the story is that it defies categorization.

Author Gwendolyn Womack has crafted a book that combines a love story, science fiction, historical fiction, and a medical thriller—and architects an imaginative world that could easily spawn several subsequent novels. It's exciting to see an author stretch her imagination like Womack in this debut novel, and I applaud her for creating a book that doesn't neatly fit into genres.

The premise is a wonderful enticement—scientists in the 80s find a drug that unlocks reincarnation. For a small group of scientists, this means uncovering repressed memories of past lives that date back to Viking exploration, ancient Rome, and imperial Egypt. In present day, the central character, Bryan, is the lynchpin to making sense of these memories. An internationally lauded artist, he creates paintings based on memories from his past lives.

The love story that unfolds between the two central characters spans millennia, and Womack heightens its drama by inserting a ubiquitous villain in every past life that keeps them apart. The beauty of the structure, where souls are hopping into new bodies in new eras, is that the mystery that binds all of it together isn't a whodunit so much as a whosit, where Womack keeps you guessing which characters are good and evil until

the final few pages.

This is a wonderful debut novel, and I'd encourage readers to go in without expectations. This isn't a thriller, or a romance, historical fiction or sci-fi. It's an imaginative novel that sets up the structure of what could lead to a potential series that follows how an ancient family dispute has played out for thousands of years, as well as the promise that for the right people, love can be eternal. The scope of the book broadens until the end, where the decisions of this handful of men and women could impact the future of humanity.

By tapping into the potential of reincarnation to drive this story forward, this book is a strong foray into the limitless possibilities that Womack's world could create for us down the road. I'm looking forward to it.

Chloe says

I picked this book up from the library shelf because it sounded intriguing.

A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF MEMORY RESEARCH. A MIRACLE DRUG THAT UNLOCKS AN ANCIENT MYSTERY.

That sounded like my kind of book! In reality, I really don't think I am the target audience for this - it's a little too fantasy for my liking.

That doesn't stop this being an amazing first book by this author - I could really appreciate the effort put into the many, often unheard of, historical characters and their stories. It's a very complex, multi-layered story, just not a page turner for me that I thought it might have been.

Kirsten says

Why is it that books that are so mediocre it almost hurts get the most outrageous advance praise? This book was promised to be "poignant and thoughtful, rich and suspenseful, filled with intrigue and dripping with meaning" - first off, what does dripping with meaning even MEAN, secondly, no. Just no. This book was also described as action-packed and sexy, which I can assure you it isn't.

I read this one because my mom had gotten it from the library and thought I might like it due to the Time Traveler's Wife vibes she got. Now, I got some of those vibes, too - how can you not when it's a book with time travel and romance? - but where the TTW is well-written and beautifully executed, this book was just a hot mess and super sloppy. It's like Pennington out in the field - you just wish it wasn't happening. Largely, I was frustrated with how poorly it was written. It really felt like someone's first year university or high school English paper, where you're told to write a short story and you think you have a great idea but halfway through you realize it's a pile of wet garbage but you've already committed so you spend the rest of your time writing it in this weird place where you're 100% certain you've lost the plot but are hoping against all hope that you're wrong. The characters were super under-developed, the plot was threadbare and patchy #demquiltreferences at best, and there was literally no suspense. I spent the whole book trying to figure out how my second grade stories about Ancient Egypt were so much better.

I'm giving it 2 stars because the concept was intriguing enough to get me to pick it up and finish, which is usually pretty hard if my Mom is recommending it (not because she has bad taste, but because we have very different taste). There were definitely elements similar to TTW and The Gargoyle (another fantastic art meets romance meets sci-fi book), but in my opinion Womack is really just too inexperienced as an author to delve into the world of time travel and come out a champion. It was way too contrived, juvenile, and straight up #whackadoo for my tastes.

Christina Marie says

RATING: 3.5 STARS

****This book was sent to me in exchange for my honest review****

I thought this was great read. Especially for a debut author. Gwendolyn Womack is a good writer. So detailed and thorough in her storytelling. I was fascinated by the premise of the book, which she describes as a "supernatural historical thriller about a group of neuroscientists who unlock the secret to reincarnation". And that's the cliff notes version of what this book is about! There is SO much to explore and learn about throughout these pages.

The main characters, Bryan and Linz, are interesting within their own rights. I, of course, was drawn more to Bryan because he's an artistic soul, but Linz is more practical. She's a scientist. But their lives intertwine when Linz encounters a painting that Bryan did. And the story just takes off from there.

I will admit that I was a little hesitant to read this book because I have an aversion to anything historical, mainly because it's a lot of information for me to grasp. And yes, I did struggle to balance all of the information that Womack threw at me with this book. Especially when it came to the various lives and reincarnations that the reader has to experience to understand the plot and how everything plays out. It's all extremely fascinating, but I had to really keep up.

Womack paints so many vivid pictures of different time periods, of different relationships and the same relationships -- over hundreds of years. As I read, I kept thinking 'Wow. This is the same person, but a different life that I'm reading about', and it all made sense! It all flowed together! Womack does a great job with keeping her timelines in comprehensive order. Yes, there are a tons of flashbacks, but they're all timely and appropriate. And when the reader comes back to present day, there's more information that helps the development of the current characters, as well as the progress of the story.

This is definitely a book where I think that the world wins over the characters. I was more into the fact that there was a lot of world building that, at times, I forgot about the characters. While Bryan and Linz weren't bad, they weren't all that interesting. Some of the supporting characters (and I say the word "supporting" very lightly because these characters played a HUGE role in this book) of Michael, Finn, Diana and Conrad were more interesting than Bryan and Linz, and as you read the book, it actually makes sense as to why that is.

Some of the plot points throughout the book were fairly predictable, especially once I got my bearings straight with the concept and flow of the book. There were a few things I saw coming a mile away. And to be honest, I was quite okay with that because I was pretty proud of myself for being able to process all of the names and locations and time periods!

There were a few moments of extended frustration on the part of Linz, because it was a bit difficult to keep up with her whiplash decision making. But she didn't deter me from enjoying the book.

While I really had a great time reading it, I definitely think that the character development really did take the book down a bit for me. I couldn't really connect with anyone in the story. It was like I was watching from the outside looking in, which for some readers is fine, but for me? I like to feel like I'm being pulled into the story. Where in this case -- I just felt like a story was being told to me.

Overall, I'd say that Gwendolyn is an author I would check out again. There's something charming about her storytelling and I am interested to see what she's going to do next!

Stephanie Ward says

'The Memory Painter' is one of those books that is nearly impossible to review - at least it is for me. There are so many aspects to this novel that come together to create a beautifully crafted and unforgettable story. The plot is what drew me to the book initially - it spoke of past lives, two people who love one another and always seem to find themselves together in their several past lives, and a fascinating mystery that promised to journey across time, space, and the entire world. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I did have pretty high hopes for the book before I began. Looking back, I had no idea what I was getting into. The novel far surpassed any kind of expectations or hopes I may have had for it - and then some. It blew my mind in the best kind of way - and I'm still thinking about it long after I finished. This isn't merely a novel that is read - it's an entire experience that will leave a lasting impression on the reader.

As I mentioned, there are so many concepts and various aspects that make up the book - each one entirely intriguing and deserving of being spoken of, but there simply isn't enough room to do so - and I certainly don't have the ability to do it any sort of justice by writing about it. I can only touch on a few of the topics and hopefully I'll be able to explain some of the reasons this novel had such an impact on me as a reader. There are two main characters - Bryan Pierce, a reclusive artist who has 'episodes' where he slips into the past and becomes a person from a different time and place. When he wakes, he has the recollection of that person's entire life - along with all of their knowledge and skills, which usually include being fluent in a foreign language and having the abilities of the person he became - which included creating clocks and being able to recite entire pieces of literature in their native tongue. Our second main character is Lindsay "Linz" Jacobs - a geneticist who is working on a huge project dealing with memories. Linz has been plagued with the same nightmare since she was a little girl - one about a woman in ancient Rome being burned at the stake. When Linz attends an art exhibit at her friends' gallery and sees her nightmare brought to life on canvas, she knows she has to talk to the artist who painted it. When Bryan and Linz meet, there's an instant connection between them - and Bryan is able to recognize Linz from every lifetime that he's remembered. Thus the mystery begins in earnest - with the two trying to figure out what they're experiencing, why they are always together in these memories, and to figure out exactly what happened to a group of scientists from the 1980s that created a drug that made all of this possible to begin with.

Although the book is told from the third person point of view - which is my least favorite writing style - the main characters were well written and had very distinct personalities and traits. By the end of the book, I felt as if I truly knew both of them - which I normally find difficult in books written in this POV. The real treasure and beauty of the novel is in the plot and the way the author carried it out. I found every single aspect of the story captivating and I couldn't get enough of it. I loved learning about the various past lives that Bryan and Linz remember - they are written with such precision and attention to detail that I could close

my eyes and feel as if I were there too. The whole concept of time travel and past lives both captivates me and boggles my mind at the same time. They're both huge topics with so many different variations and possibilities that I find it hard to wrap my mind around them. The author was able to open the door to these ideas and allowed us to get a glimpse inside without being overwhelming. I do have to admit that the writing did take a little bit to get used to. The use of the third person point of view along with the parts of the book that contain the jumps backward in time were a bit hard to get used to, but once I became accustomed to the style, I was able to easily slip inside the story and the world(s) the author created. I can't even begin to describe the different lifetimes that we get to read about during the book - or even the story that occurs in the present with Bryan and Linz - because I can't seem to find the right words at all. And, like I said before, I wouldn't be able to do the book the justice it truly deserves with my thoughts and feeble attempt at a review.

I can only say that this was one of the best books I've ever read - for so many different reasons. It's wholly unique and captivating, and will leave the reader wishing it wouldn't end as well as making a last impression. There's so much involved in the story - little details and things I know I missed - along with wanting to experience it all over again. I know without a doubt that I will be re-reading this novel several times over and will probably discover something new each time. I can't recommend this book highly enough. The author mixes together such a wide variety of genres that there's a little bit of something for everyone inside it's pages, and I believe that readers of all types of fiction should get their hands on a copy of this book. It's a beautifully written, thought provoking, and mesmerizing masterpiece that will surely become a huge hit. The fact that it's the author's debut novel also blew my mind. There's absolutely no way I would've guessed it myself. The writing shows a truly natural talent and the story is simply magnificent. This is an author to keep your eye on - if this was just the beginning of what she's capable of, I can't wait to read what she comes out with next!

Disclosure: I received a copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

Vika aka ? of GIF & Grumpy Smut-ateer *P/T Freebie Fairy says

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“Our fates are intertwined. I will find you again and again until we build a bridge back to this life. Nothing is ever lost.”

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My god it has been a while since a book had such a profound impact on me. I read a lot and constantly therefore find myself being harder and harder to impress. However, this read has totally blew me away. I have raved to anyone who would listen about how much I was enjoying the book. Gwendolyn Womack is a GENIUS! The book is so thoroughly well planned and researched that few times I had to remind myself I

was reading fiction and events that were occurring even though they might coincide with nonfiction world they were used fictitiously. Looking at Gwendolyn's bio it is no wonder that happened as she used her life experiences to make the story really come alive. After finishing this at 2am last night (who needs to be functional at work when you got a FANTASTIC fictional world holding you hostage) I had dreams that were throughly influenced by the read. The whole book was full of twists and turns and thought provoking events and questions BUT the end.. the end is what really got to me! When all things unraveled... actions that triggered the events of the entire book... thousands years in the making... So of course I took all of that with me into dream land which felt like hallucination trip as I was convinced my dogs were the reincarnations of my past life friends by the morning. :lol:

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I am Bryan Pierce. I am standing in my studio. I am here now. I am Bryan Pierce. I am standing in my studio. I am here now. I am Bryan Pierce. He forced the words into his consciousness, grabbing onto their simple truth like a child reaching for the string of a kite. The words were the only thing that kept him from flying away.

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This beautiful story follows present day Bryan Pierce, an artist by trade who all his life had dreams of people from different times and places in history. Dreams that were not pure dreams but were recollections of his past self. Little pieces of him coming together. With each recollection he would remember all his life and with it ALL that it entailed, happy and sad times. The only way he stayed sane is becoming a hermit only resurfacing when necessary but mostly staying to himself as the more he recalled the more he saw the people he encountered as the past souls from his previous lives. That saying that says that eyes are the window to the soul is very much on point in this book. We are immediately thrown into Bryan's life with a vision, as a reader we see what he sees, we somewhat experience what he does in his recollection but the effect is the one he has to deal with himself. The only way he functions is by drawing that what he sees in hopes of finding someone, anyone who can relate or recognize the important of his art work...

By serendipity or perhaps predestination he runs into Linz Jacobs at a museum, soul he recognizes as the one he is always closest to. Linz Jacobs is a neurogeneticist whose work focuses on decoding genes that make memories. Although Linz does not share the profound revelation upon meeting Bryan as he does she does realize he is important on an unconscious level. Her rational mind screams irrational but her soul... her being telling her that Bryan is the answer to a question she doesn't know exist to be asked.

In the end they are two souls who are always together in their reincarnations even if they are not always of romantic nature but they do share a connection at a profound level. That poses the question whether you reincarnate through pure chance or perhaps with another soul that at one point through the time you formed a strong bond that will keep you tied together through eternity(?). That is the biggest question of the book, biggest one you can discuss to no end as I believe there is no right answer. I have my own thoughts on this and having read the book know what the author destined for her fictional characters.

Even though the whole story revolves around the present day Bryan and Linz, the story unfolds many past lives both from their recollections as the story develops and from secondary characters. There is a huge overlap of NOW timeline of Bryan/Linz and their past incarnate that is arguably triggered by their past lives of Michael and Diana and their research team that in a way triggered the events. Their science opened the door to the metaphysicals that goes beyond religion and sociology. To the points of do we really have any new habits or everything gets passed down but we are just not aware of it as none of us have reached the level of recalling past lives. I don't know... again it's fiction and I'm getting lost again.

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“Between the beginning and the end, this life is but one moment.”

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So in its heart this book poses a lot of theological questions for the mind as well as providing a great story line full of mystery and suspense. I wasn't bored a minute reading this and often lost chunks of time falling so deeply into the story. This book is definitely going into the re-read section... perhaps even a try for the audiobook... or even needs to be read as a book club as I would have LOVED to discuss EVERYTHING.

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~Ebook gifted in exchange for an honest review.~

Chad Malkamaki says

One of the most frustrating books I've read in a long time. The plot and idea for the story is great, the execution is meh. Linz is one of the worst heroine's I've run across, supposedly a brilliant geneticist, she's an utter mess in all other aspects in life. I don't know how many times I wanted to scream at the pages about her childish decisions she makes, especially when it comes to interactions with Bryan.

Also, a book about reincarnation is most likely going to fall into the standard cliché, "why are people always famous in their past lives?" This book falls into that trope to a T, with the main characters amazingly living as some of the most important or revered people of their times. Oh here's a twist, instead of being Leif Erikson, we'll make them the Viking that actually discovered America's first, they just didn't step foot on land.

My last issue with the book comes with the ending. I really, really, wanted to rate this book higher about half way through (I knew from the beginning that I was torn between 3 and 4 stars) after page 121 the book really had me hooked and I couldn't wait for the conclusion and it just fell flat. The story ends in a very unsatisfying manner, that made me close this book in frustration and all I could think of was, did this book just suddenly end without a conclusion. Yes it did and hence you get three stars. I really feel that the editors have as much to answer for this as Ms. Womack. Probably if I see her name on the shelf again, not sure if I'll pick up the book.

Alison McMahan says

What are the basic premises of the reincarnation love story? I believe there are three.

First basic premise of the reincarnation love story: in every past life, the characters were not just a peasant raising pigs or even a dog or a tree, but someone historically famous. Someone's whose name is still a household name today.

The twist in this book is that as the couple remember their different lives, they also recover the skills they earned in that life. I think Ms. Womack has just added a trope that all reincarnation love stories will have to have from now on. Because Duh. If you can remember your past life you must be able to remember the language you spoke back then, and the mad skills they burn you at the stake for, right? For me, a veteran reader of reincarnation love stories, that was a refreshing twist.

The second basic premise of the reincarnation love story is this: if two people fall in love in their first life, they will love each other again and again, no matter how many lifetimes they share. No cheating, even after having had hundreds of lives together over a ten-thousand year span.

This is the main reason why we read these stories. It's why we read almost any love story: we want to believe in true love, that true love is something that endures beyond us, from lifetime to lifetime, spanning the centuries. We want to believe in soulmates, in Plato's idea that humans were once two bound together as one, with four arms and four legs and two heads, which were then split by the gods as punishment for their arrogance. The two halves, once separated, spend their lifetime trying to find each other again, and only those that succeed know true happiness.

The Memory Painter delivers on the soulmate premise, though many of the couple's lives together did not

end well.

But where it really pays off is in how it materializes the third premise: if someone hated you in a past life, they are going to hate you in this one. This is the part of the reincarnation plot where most books fail. The Memory Painter is both romance and a mystery, and the solution to the mystery involves a surprise twist.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I would like to say thank you to the author and publisher for giving me an opportunity to read this ARC of the book.

I would liked to have given it more than three stars but it just didn't grip me like I was hoping.

I loved the premise of the book and some of the characters a lot, well, Linz and Bryan as themselves. I just couldn't get into living all of the lives they live and looking into the past. Of course, you throw in some evilness and there you go.

The way it ends leaves it wide open for a sequel because they are going to go on a hunt for a book.

I really wanted to love this book, and for a bit I was drawn into it, but then something about all of the different reincarnations and stuff have my mind in a state.

I know there will be plenty of people that will love this book. It's just not for me. If you love, time traveling, history, science, then you will love this book. Oh and a love story thrown in too. :)

Mary (Marbear) says

I was given a galley of this book from Picador. Finished the book last night. Amazing book. This book has everything: mystery, suspense, love, travel, etc. Very complex characters. Only a talented author could pull off the plot of this book. I think this will be one of the runaway books of 2015. Well done Gwen.

Lisa says

"What if there was a drug that could help you remember your past lives?

What if the lives you remember could lead to your one true love?

What if you learned, that for thousands of years, a deadly enemy has conspired to keep the two of you apart?"

That was on the back cover and it intrigued me. What if you were able to dream your past lives? In this book a man dreams them and paints them. It's a mystery to be solved because the same people occur over and over throughout their lives. The mystery is the villain and why he/she has been after them for all those centuries. There are a lot of interesting tid bits in this book throughout history. From the Great Pyramids to monks in China, a famous painter, a violin maker, the Japanese custom of tooth blackening to adventurers and more.

I enjoyed learning about their past lives and how it tied everyone together.

Elizabeth Fredericks says

It's a compelling premise, ultimately undercut by the flatness of the protagonists and villain alike. How these people are shaped by their careers and choices is unclear, as are their personalities. And the choices of their past lives seem to simply encompass as large a range of historical figures as possible without much consideration as to what connects them, whether they are artists, scientists, soldiers, or craftsmen. Kim Stanley Robinson's "Years of Rice and Salt" has a connecting tissue and a willingness to consider the meaningful nature of ordinary lives that would've greatly enhanced "The Memory Painter." As is, by the climax, characters seem to be moving by rote through the actions demanded of them by the plot, rather than meaningfully shaping the plot through their own natures and decisions.

Ron says

The Memory Painter opens to a scene within an artist's loft. As we visualize paintings depicting a Samurai, a Persian guard, a priest of ancient Rome, and countless more unknown to us, we are introduced to Bryan Pierce, the painter, in a confused state of mind, as if he had just awoken from a dream. In fact, he had, and as he then rewinds a video recorder, we realize that he also painted the most recent portrait within a dream state.

The mystery deepens when Gwen sees the recurring nightmare that haunted her childhood, displayed in one of his paintings. The dream is this: a woman burns at a stake as the Roman priest tries to free her. In her dream, Gwen is the woman. How could the dream she has never revealed, except to her father, be so perfectly depicted on a stranger's canvas? Although Gwen does not know Bryan, Bryan believes their lives are connected.

This story is a puzzle of sorts increasingly revealed to the reader. As we learn the full connection between Bryan and Gwen, or think we do, the book also becomes an almost-taught thriller. To me the book felt like many things. Part mystery, part cat-and-mouse chase through history, part love story (some will wholly appreciate that part). It was science and it was science-fiction. Some of the story really worked for me and some not quite so much. Maybe I was comparing it to the real world, instead of remembering this is a work of fiction, as it was meant to be. I did guess the "right turn" coming at me towards the end, but that's okay. I still liked it.

Diane S ? says

I was definitely not the target audience for this book since I read very little fantasy and time travel books. In fact I am not quite sure how to classify the genre for this book because it literally has a little bit of everything. Despite this I did find the idea of dreaming people's lives and then painting them rather fascinating. Memory and how it can follow from life to life and a drug that allows some to do so. The last part of the book was faster paced and I ended up liking this more than I thought I would. An interesting plot for a story and the author did it well.

Erin says

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My purchase of Gwendolyn Womack's *The Memory Painter* was something of a surprise. I mean no offense, but when push comes to shove I'm a bit of a penny pincher and rarely buy books blindly. Truth is, I'd not heard of this piece before spotting the striking yellow cover at the Historical Novel Society Conference bookstore and was entirely unfamiliar with the author. I queried a handful of my peers and while they agreed the book looked promising, no one had read it and I wasn't entirely convinced I wanted to be the first to plunge into a debut. Historically speaking, such ventures seldom ended in my favor, but something about the description sparked my curiosity and refused to let go. I debated a while, but ultimately caved to indecision and acquired the title.

I'll be honest, things did not start well. I spent the first three chapters wondering what I'd gotten myself into, but all that changed in chapter four. The plot started coming together and the story began to find its feet. The rush, however, was short-lived and by the end of chapter eleven, I felt I could confidently predict how things would turn out. Chapters twelve through thirty-nine didn't leave much of an impression, the drama was diverting enough, but predictable in my eyes. The pacing intensified in chapter forty and the curve-ball in chapter forty-five found me cheering Womack's creativity, but the moment was all too brief as the novel concluded only three chapters later.

Did I like the story? Yes, looking back at the plot, I think *The Memory Painter* a fun crossover piece. There isn't as much history as I'd hoped, but I enjoyed the elements Womack wove into the narrative. I think the author could have done more with the emotional relationship between Bryan and Linz, but the pair proved enjoyable protagonists nonetheless. I found Finn and Conrad incredibly interesting, but you'll have to read the book to understand why. As far as supporting characters are concerned, I liked Barbara, but felt Claudette, Martin and Layla underdeveloped in comparison which bothered me as I felt their roles should have placed them on more equal footing.

Ideally, I'd have loved a historical note. Something that explained how and why the author chose the historic figures that appear throughout the piece. Personally, I'd have loved to know why certain figures, Louis Le Vau and Pedro Damiano for example, were less prominent than Origenes Adamantius and Alexander Pushkin. I'd also have liked a slightly stronger finish. I appreciate that Womack's conclusion is meant to lead into a follow-up, but the final notes of the narrative felt rushed and awkward just the same.

Would I recommend *The Memory Painter*? As usual, that would depend on the reader. Diehard historic fiction fans might find the book a difficult sell, but the book incorporates exciting elements of both thrillers and science fiction and should prove quite entertaining to those with varied tastes and open minds.

Racheli Zusiman says

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Ruthie says

Very interesting premise (if not truly original) with fascinating dips into history. This book reminded me of the children's chapter book series "The Magic Treehouse" by Mary Pope Osborne, in that as a reader, I was given a glimpse into moments in history that motivated me to do further research. In this book, the two protagonists have lived many past lives (none of them dull or "normal") and one remembers most of them, the other does not. They meet cute and we are then taken on an adventure as there are forces that will try to stop them from being together and from remembering everything...

My problem with the book is that the characters did not feel fully realized and I did not buy their instant attraction. A bigger issue was that the author relied on "telling" rather than "showing" us what happens, how people feel etc. There were endless descriptive cliches that I found very annoying. The ending felt very rushed and purposely left open for a sequel, ugh.

As others have noted, the author did a very good job writing a treatment for a movie, I can easily see this being a better film than it was a novel.

Lisa says

SUMMARY

Ryan Pierce is a reclusive, but internationally known artist. His skills and success as an artist are renown, and the images he paints comes from his dreams. His studio walls are covered in paintings to numerous to count. Each painting more vivid than the next, captures a different time in history, a different place and each depict an intimate moment in a person's life or death. Because he can remember intricate details and feelings Brian believes these dreams may actually be flashbacks to other lives he may have lived. He hopes that showing his works to others, may lead him to answers about the meaning of dreams.

Linz Jacobs is a Nuero-geneticist at Medicor, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. She is currently decoding the DNA genes for memories. While attending an art opening, at some friends' gallery, Linz recognizes the scene in one of Brian's paintings as exactly that of a haunting recurring childhood nightmare she had had. It was a chilling scene of a beautiful woman being burned at the stake while a priest, prisoners and guards look on. The details captured her dream so accurately she needed an explanation. She absolutely has to meet the artist. Upon meeting, Brian and Linz have an instant and intense connection. Brian believes that Linz may be able to help him unlock the meaning behind these dreams.

But meeting Linz has triggered another intense and harrowing dream for Brian. It's a horrific explosion in a research lab where a team of scientists were just on the verge of discovering a cure for Alzheimer's. Several of the scientists were killed. The research project was destroyed. Brian is driven to find out more about this project. Linz know nothing about this research. Working together, Bryan and Linz try to find a key to explain Bryan's dreams. But it may not be so easy. Someone is trying to prevent them from getting to close to the truth.

REVIEW

This is no ordinary book. THE MEMORY PAINTER is a complex story which is beautifully crafted into an easy-to-read novel. It's a novel containing historical fiction, a medical thriller, science fiction, time travel and romance, all woven together in a unique and captivating way. I can't stop talking about this book, and yet it's so hard to adequately describe. It must be read. I was telling all my friends about this novel before I was even halfway through it. I was also scouring the Internet for clues on whether the historical people and events were real.

Brian and Linz's characters are strong and well-developed. You can't help but pull for them. Their story will stretch your imagination and keep you guessing. It is filled with twists, turns, betrayal, love and hope. And travel. Brian's dreams takes him from a duel in Russia in 1837, to a samurai performing seppuku in Japan in 1702, to a Viking exploration in Greenland in 986 and to a monastery in China in 527. It sounds crazy, but it all make sense and you can't help but want more.

A instrumental portion of the story centers around the Alzheimer's research project from 1982. Womack, creatively uses excerpts from one of the scientist's research journals to tell the story of the project, the team and the project results. The journals help give authenticity Brian's dreams.

GWENDOLYN WOMACK does a fabulous job weaving the story in her debut novel. **THE MEMORY PAINTER** was the winner of the 2016 RWA PRISM award in the time travel/steampunk category and a finalist for best first novel. Her second novel will be released in June 2017 and I for one can't wait. Thanks to Serena at Heath and Soul for the recommendation.
