

PICADOR

# Reading Group Gold

## *The Memory Painter*

*A Novel*

By Gwendolyn Womack

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**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.

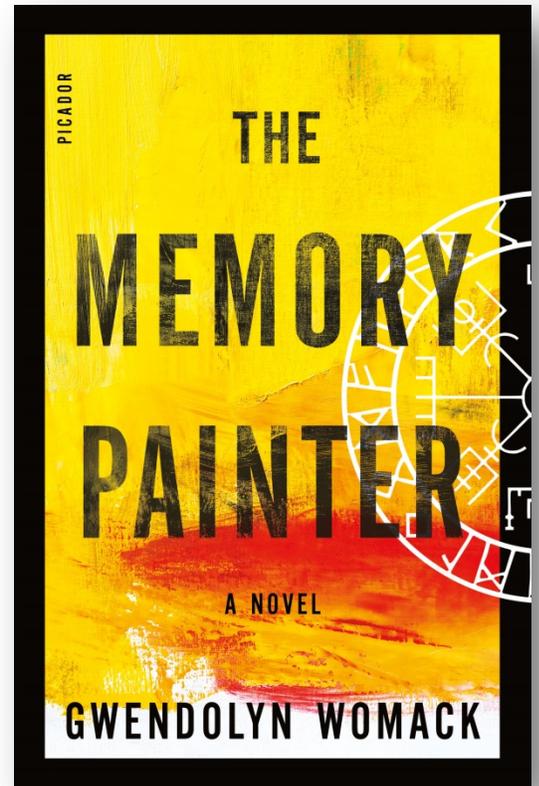
Linz Jacobs is a brilliant neurogeneticist, absorbed in decoding the genes that help the brain make memories, until she is confronted with an exact rendering of a recurring nightmare at one of Bryan's shows. She tracks down the elusive artist, and their meeting triggers Bryan's most powerful dream yet: 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.

### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) Bryan and Linz return to Boston at the same time, and they feel the urge to go to the museum on the same day. Where do you think the intersection lies between coincidence and predestination? Were they destined to meet on that day, at that time?
- 2) Bryan and Linz respond to each other powerfully at their first encounter. Even though Bryan remembers more than Linz, do you think he feels more than she does in the beginning?



- 3) How has Bryan been damaged by the continuous stream of memories he is experiencing and how has he been fortunate?
- 4) Why do you think Linz became a neurogeneticist? Is she trying to continue the work Diana began in the past?
- 5) How do you think Linz truly feels looking at all of Bryan's paintings? Does she have a spark of recognition to certain images? What do you think is the underlying cause to her suppressing her feelings?
- 6) Why do you think Bryan is so angry with his mother? Were you surprised by the Bjarni lifetime connection?
- 7) Which lifetime that Bryan has remembered do you think has had the most profound effect on him in this present life? Which lifetime prepared him the most for this life and "fulfilling his mission?"
- 8) Describe your first impressions of Conrad with three words. Then describe your last impression of him by the end of the book with three words.
- 9) At what point in the story did Conrad recognize Bryan was Michael? Which lifetimes of Linz's do you think Conrad already recognized within her?
- 10) Why did you think Bryan was painting the miniature of Layla? Did you know who she was in the past before Bryan did?
- 11) Why did you think Bryan was so compelled to go to Newfoundland? What did you imagine he would find? Who did you think Claudette and Martin were, since Bryan couldn't recognize them?
- 12) Who did you think the Egyptian Goddess was that was appearing in Bryan's dreams? When she boarded the train and told Bryan, "See your soul outside of time and you will arrive at your destination," what message was she trying to impart?
- 13) What was your favorite lifetime in the book?
- 14) Do you believe in reincarnation? Have you ever met someone you felt you knew before, or visited a place you felt you had been to before?
- 15) Bryan recognizes many people in his life as people who have been close to him in previous lives. If you do believe in reincarnation, do you think people reincarnate again with the same souls?
- 16) Conrad says, "History isn't so grand when you've lived it." If you could be anyone in history, who would it be?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Originally from Houston, Texas, **Gwendolyn Womack** began writing plays in college while freezing in the tundra at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She received an MFA from CalArts in Directing for theater and film and was a semi-finalist in the Academy's Nicholl Fellowship. She currently she resides in California and can be found at her keyboard.



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