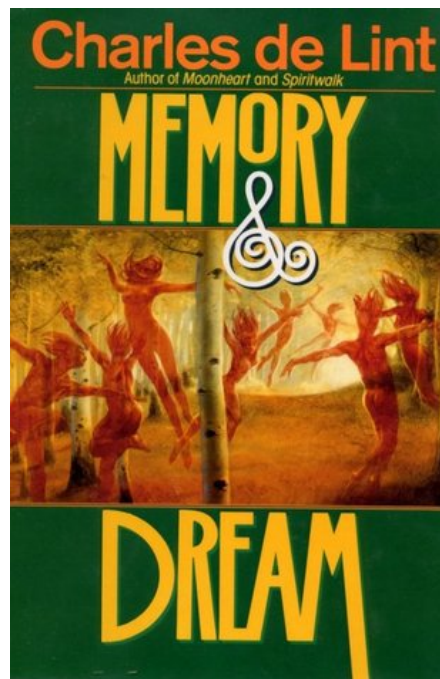




Memory & Dream

Charles de Lint , John Howe (illustrator)

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Isabelle Copley's visionary art frees ancient spirits. As a young student of the cruel, brilliant artist Vincent Ruskin, she discovered she could paint images so vividly real they brought her wildest fantasies to life. But when the forces she unleashed brought tragedy to those she loved, she turned her back on her talent -- and on her dreams.

Now twenty years later, Isabelle must come to terms with the shattering memories she has long denied and unlock the slumbering power of her brush. And, in a dark reckoning with her old master, she must find the courage to live out her dreams and bring the magic back to life.

"The [Newford] books have all been written in such a way that you should be able to pick up any one and get a full and complete story. However, characters do reoccur, off center stage as it were, and their stories do follow a sequence."

Memory & Dream Details

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Author : Charles de Lint , John Howe (illustrator)

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From Reader Review Memory & Dream for online ebook

Ben Babcock says

I don't pay much attention to blurbs on book covers. The worst one are when the publisher has cherry-picked a list of adjectives from someone's review, as if hearing that the *New York Times* thought a book is "inspiring, powerful, thought-provoking" is going to make me want to read it any more or less. Blurbs have little substance and are not helpful. Most of the time. But I'm going to start off by quoting the *Library Journal* blurb on the front cover of my edition of *Memory & Dream*:

De Lint moves gracefully through the borders between reality and imagination, weaving a powerful tale about the relationship between an artist and her work.

This is an exception that proves the rule. This is a blurb that matters. It counts, in all the right ways, and I'm hard pressed to think of a better way to describe *Memory & Dream* and the effect it has on a reader.

Charles de Lint is a pretty great writer. Firstly, of course, he's Canadian—I am legally required to point that out. Secondly, he writes contemporary urban fantasy without any of the paranormal investigation tropes that are so popular these days. His books could be mistaken for literary fiction, if you got dropped on the head and just ignored the parts with magic in them. They are just at the edge of the spectrum of magical realism, where it starts to bleed over into pure fantasy.

In this particular case, de Lint tells a story across two time periods. Isabelle Copley—or Izzy, as she is known in her younger time—is an artist with a gift. Mentored by a reclusive and manic artist named Vincent Rushkin, Izzy learns how to create paintings that act as gateways, bringing across *numena* from another world who manifest in the forms she paints. But after her relationship with Rushkin sours, Izzy retreats, becomes Isabelle, and turns her back on this gift. Only five years after the suicide of her best friend does Isabelle start confronting the events of twenty years ago.

The title here is key: de Lint hints that Isabelle's memory is not always reliable, that she has edited history to be easier to deal with. By telling the story across two time periods, we get to see two versions of Isabelle: the growing, blossoming artist who is struggling with her newfound ability; the older, more experienced woman who has been burned once (literally) and is reluctant to engage again on that level.

It's viscerally disturbing, watching young Izzy fall prey to all sorts of perils. From the abusive nature of her mentorship under Rushkin to the creepy vibe in her relationship with John, Izzy seems to fall repeatedly into these situations where she is unable or unwilling to have agency. It's interesting that in the times she does exercise her agency, pushes away Rushkin or John or rejects her ability to create numena, she almost always ends up regretting it.

I have to hand it to de Lint, because I don't actually like Isabelle (or Izzy) all that much as a character. She doesn't have much in the way of fierce determination or backbone—*gumption*, they'd probably call it in the old days—but instead tends to go along with the flow, even if it's going to end badly. Nevertheless, de Lint's skill as a writer means I can still sympathize with Isabelle. I understand why she is that way, why she reacts to these challenges in the way she does. I don't *like* it, but I sympathize with it.

Because that's what de Lint has managed to capture here: a simple but important truth, which is that life is

hard. Creating is hard. Having responsibility for something external to oneself is hard.

I'm not much for the visual arts, despite having worked in a gallery for six of the last eight years. I did enjoy de Lint's description of the technical parts of Isabelle's creative process, however, as much as I liked hearing about Kathy and Alan's literary endeavours. Creative people like this recur throughout de Lint's books, and they always seem to be the ones able to pierce the veil and cross the void between worlds. According to de Lint, creativity is our direct line to our soul, and to our creator.

So in his portrayals of Isabelle and Kathy, Alan and Marisa, Jilly and Rolanda—and we mustn't forget the numena either—de Lint examines the marks that creativity leaves on people. He depicts both the great joys and relief that creativity brings as well as the terrible doubts, the stress, the pain. Rushkin and his twisted numena, the very idea of consuming the spirits we create, alludes to the darkness in the core of every human being. Creativity allows us to tap into that darkness in a raw and powerful way, but it is not without its dangers. This is the problem Isabelle has, the fear that if she brings across more numena, she will fail them (like she failed Kathy...).

Layered atop these questions is the question of whether the numena are real. What is reality anyway? Is it being able to bleed and dream, having the "red crow," as Cosette puts it? Or is Isabelle correct—are the numena real because she gave them a piece of herself in their making? And will they survive her own death? So many questions, none of which de Lint ever hands down a single, definitive answer. But this only makes the story that much more tantalizing. My interest was starting to flag towards the end (I think the book itself is a hundred pages too long), but I kept going, not out of a sense of duty to finish, but because I was still intrigued by this particular theme.

As with his previous books that I've read, *Memory & Dream* concerns a protagonist's personal journey as it intersects with a larger external conflict. Isabelle must stop Rushkin. But to do that, she has to confront the barriers she has erected within herself. De Lint seems interested in how we construct our own realities, how we lie to ourselves or change our memories to suit us, and how we define ourselves: are we artists or painters, writers or authors—what labels do we use? Whereas in some of his novels the fantasy element is foregrounded, here the numena are companions, but they never steal the stage. This is a story about how we value and judge ourselves and our creations. It is very powerful. It's not perfect; it's a little long, and your mileage will vary when it comes to how much you like the protagonist. But it's yet another example of why Charles de Lint is a fantastic voice in fantasy.

Allison Hurd says

This is probably 3.5 stars. The things that worked well were top notch and the things that worked less well were still okay, just kludgy compared to the mastery in the other areas.

First and foremost, allow me to give a content warning. This book discusses rape, child abuse, and domestic violence quite often and with no context clues to warn you it's about to happen. I will say that it was less exploitative and less graphic than most books that bring it up, for whatever that's worth.

Things I loved:

-The world. I think I'd call this more like a new age fairy tale than straight up urban fantasy, but I see why he's called the father of urban fantasy. So many rich things to draw on, I can't wait to learn more.

- The diversity of the cast. While vocabulary has moved on since this book was written, it is clear that Charles worked hard to represent real people, and people who weren't just white. I always appreciate that.
- The writing. While occasionally it felt like it got a little tangled, by and large the prose was strong, fluid and whimsical.

Things that frustrated me:

- Gosh, you just have to be so careful weaving sexual assault and domestic violence and mental illness into things. He did a better job of it than many books I've read but I still found it a little flat, if I'm going to read a book largely premised on surviving abuses.
- The mysteries were almost all of the "right out of left field" kind. After awhile, learning that something has happened off screen that explains everything but there's no way we could have known, should have guessed, or have cause to accept this new revelation as truth is tiresome.
- SO MUCH RECAPING. I get it. There were multiple POVs and they were all separate to begin with. But I don't need to have that much exposition, and it really messed with the pacing.
- All of the plot lines felt like they needed some extra sanding and varnish. They all felt unfinished, and not in the "to be continued" sort of way so much as the "my editor told me this was due yesterday" sort of way. It would have been a fine story except so much of it was highly polished, so the parts that still had a couple splinters became that much more noticeable.
- While the diversity was appreciated, I would hope that more care was taken to avoid stereotypes in future works.
- The explanations of the magic were inconsistent and I don't think I quite understand how it works.
- Once again, the set up in the beginning of the book had more or less nothing to do with the rest of the book. I tend to expect that what I'm told at the point I know nothing will be significant to the book, and in this case I felt misled.

I will be continuing the series, and I would recommend this book to people with the attendant content warning.

Arielle Walker says

3.5

I adore Charles Lint, Newford, all the characters that fill it - everything about his world.

I just think sometimes the "magic" of his writing is a little hit and miss. Unfortunately this was the case with Memory and Dream. Parts of it mesmerised, and these parts I would happily give five full stars and claim perfection. Other parts felt overly preachy, tell not show, *this* is what you should feel because people are awful etc etc.

Still, the perfect moments are there, the plot is interesting and the descriptions of art are so deliciously evocative that I am now torn between despair at my lack of patience with oils, and desire to run straight to my studio and paint and paint and paint.

Althea Ann says

I keep reading de Lint's books, and almost loving them. But I never quite do. I spent some time today

thinking about why, and I think it's that, although I like the type of people he tends to feature as characters, and I tend to agree with many of his themes, I think that what he wants to "say" comes before his actual story.

Some books, one feels that the action springs from the characters and who they are - in de Lint's, I feel that he's almost walking them through it.

"Memory and Dream" is about a young art student who meets a famous, reclusive artist. He becomes her mentor - but is also controlling and abusive. But - he teaches her a technique of painting that allows her to open a gateway through her paintings, allowing creatures of magic to "step through" and take physical form in our world.

Years later, she has rejected this ability - and through both memories and illusions, we see the story of why - in a tale that involves her best friend's death, friends estranged, hidden child abuse, and a foundation to help troubled kids through art... but also magical beings.

When, five years after her friend's death, a letter that was delayed in the mail arrives, a chain of events is set in motion that will bring all of both the magic and trauma of the past back to be dealt with, and she will realize evil secrets may be deeper than she ever knew.

Actually, that seems to be one of de Lint's themes that I disagree with. If I recall correctly, "Forests of the Heart" had a similar thing going on - someone that people always made excuses for, but who turned out to be PURE EVIL. de Lint seems to be hinting that there isn't such a thing as a flawed person, with both bad and good in them - it's either good or evil, and what people do is just kid themselves that these people aren't really evil. And moreover, I feel there's an agenda behind the writing, to encourage readers to kick those flawed, depressed or controlling/manipulative/abusive people out of their lives. Not that I'm saying that people shouldn't ditch such people - but I think one can recognize an unhealthy relationship without going to the "PURE EVIL!" extreme.

When all the characters fall into "types" (artistic but emotionally sensitive/gullible student, abusive and powerful mentor, rape victim, child abuse victim, well-meaning and kind black social worker, honorable and justice-seeking Native American, good-at-heart gang members, troubled children who are victims of society, etc) it begins to feel a little preachy, and a little idealistic. In this book, I didn't just feel like I was reading a story about people who wanted to run a non-profit agency to help street kids, I felt like I was being exhorted to donate time and money to such charities.

I think the reason for this is that although such "troubled kids" appear in the book, none of them make more than two-dimensional, cameo appearances. It gives the feeling of do-gooders proffering charity, rather than offering insight into what it might be like to grow up on the streets. The brief flashback into the abused character's being forced into child porn really didn't ring true, either...

Hmm. I'm sounding a little harsh now. I did actually like this book. I've read a lot of de Lint's books, and I'll read more. I like the way he meshes magic with a 'modern bohemian' setting. But a message is more effective when more subtly given...

Dorian says

1992. Isabelle is a successful and respected artist when her slightly reclusive life is interrupted, first by the arrival of a letter from her dearest friend, dead these five years, and then by another friend, wanting her to illustrate an anthology of the dead friend's short stories.

1973. Izzy is a naive art student when she meets Vincent Rushkin, one of the greatest living painters of her

age, and he takes her on as an apprentice...but Rushkin is controlling, and abusive, and while what he has to teach is more than just art, the price is high...

This is a complex book which moves back and forth between past and present, to some extent leaving the reader to figure out for herself how the past events shaped the present character. And to gradually realise that if not exactly a narrator, Isabelle is a distinctly unreliable POV character.

Parts of it I find hard to read; the depictions of Izzy's relationship with Rushkin are uncompromising and I find her behaviour very hard to take (even though I know it's probably an accurate depiction). Things get easier in that respect after about the middle of the book.

Still...I loved this book when I first read it, about 20 years ago. Now, it seems to have lost a lot of its magic. It's still, especially in the second half, a good read, but it's no longer the brilliant book it used to be.

Zanna says

3.5 stars

It's been a long time since I read a book like this and initially I found the image-laden realistic description style clunky, feeling that far fewer words were needed to express the ideas on offer. I was soon sucked into the story though, and after a while I realised my reading experience was very similar to watching a film, which was fun.

I found this a quick and easy read, a little cheesy and artificial, but emotionally intense and very absorbing. I enjoyed the tropes - the bohemian quarters, the farmhouse on the island accessible only by rowing boat, the eccentric mentor... There was a little bit of diversity going on, in terms of race and sexuality, and social justice issues got some unsubtle but well-meaning attention. I was reminded of Neil Gaiman's Sandman comics and his character Death. There was also some Thomas King influence, which will always float my boat. I thought the magical aspects were nicely handled, but I found all of the characters flat and unconvincing to varying degrees.

Morgan Lewis says

This may be my favourite book of all time. I am such a fan of Charles De Lint - his characters are so vivid and real, his imagery incredibly evocative, his themes magical and compelling - and this book is absolutely wonderful.

I have lost track of the number of times I have read this book. I've destroyed one copy of it, just by rereading it one too many times, and my current copy (although still readable) is definitely well-loved. I have never read a De Lint book I didn't like - they are all amazingly well-written, complex, and, frankly, magical. He has quite a few very good one-off novels, though I particularly love his Newford stories, probably because that's how I was first introduced to his works.

Kathy, Izzy, Alan, John, Jilly, and all the characters in this book just leapt out at me, and that's why I continue to return to it time and again.

I recommend this book to anyone who'll listen. It's truly just that good.

April Schultz says

I have a soft spot for Charles de Lint. He has a way of writing urban fantasy that doesn't *feel* like urban fantasy. It feels like literature. It is expansive, the ideas are greater than the book itself, the thematic elements linger with the reader long after the last page is read.

Memory and Dream is no exception. I read a review of this a few days ago that stated that the main character Izzy/Isabelle is not a sympathetic character. I find that incredibly hard to believe. The moment I started reading the story I found her to be sympathetic and relate-able. She is naive and inspired and comes from a home not exactly broken, but somewhere in a more nebulous region of emotional neglect and pain. I immediately identified with her.

The book is broken up between characters, over different periods of time and through journal entries. It is about a quarter of the way through the novel that you realize Izzy/Isabelle is an unreliable narrator which is writing device I LOVE. When you realize this you begin to question everything and the truth, whatever that is (the novel worries at the edges of what the definition of truth is), is slowly revealed in the last quarter of the novel.

Alan, Cosette, Annie Nin, Kathy and Jilly are all excellent supporting characters. They are living, fully realized characters, unlike many authors secondary characters. you never feel cheated out of knowing them. A lot of the names are recognizable from other Newford stories that de Lint has written and there is a comfort in returning to a well-known friend in the pages of a new story.

At times heartbreaking, horrific, and other times uplifting, this is a story for people who recognize the magic that lies around them in their day to day lives. The magic, and the strife.

Greg Hamerton says

This story had a deep impact on me. It opens with an innocent sketch in a town square; it soon becomes a deeply engaging study of the act of creation and the mind of an artist.

If I took out my editor's pencil, I'd only be able to mark one paragraph in the entire book, where a minor character is granted a bit too much page space to rant about his over-intellectualised opinions of art. It is in character though. And that's it. The single tiny flaw I was aware of, if flaw it is. I mention it only to show that I attempted to be critical, but could not really find fault. The story is mostly flawless, and breathtaking.

There is a twist that throws a new light on the whole story, right at the end, which as a reader is an absolute delight. As my mind recapitulates the tale I get a new version and insight into what I've already learned. This is so satisfying, it's as if I get two stories for the price of one, this deepening of the experience is something I intend to incorporate into my own writing. I shall read more of Charles de Lint's work. He is a master of his art. He deserves study. Maybe, even, demands it.

The value of this story is an appreciation of the relationship between master and apprentice. True, this story is an extreme relationship, but that brings things to light that in many relationships of this kind would be submerged, suppressed or sub-conscious.

The world de Lint creates is entirely believable, because it does not seem to be a creation (one of the benefits of a contemporary setting). There is so much that is familiar, that the subtle elements of magic slip into this framework without alarming the reader. Even though the created characters could be interpreted to be largely symbolic, I accepted them in the story world and the more I believed the story, the more they slipped into the 'real' world. (Is there a 'real' world, I began to wonder?)

The structure is not chronological. As more of the past is revealed, we can puzzle together the present. This is a clever mirror of what Isobelle Copley is attempting to do. .. piece together her life from her traumatised memory. That she is trying to understand the great power of her art makes it all the more poignant. This is a great storytelling technique.

In many ways, this is the classic tale of the sorcerer's apprentice. We get a foreshadowing of what she could become, if she follows in her master's footsteps: consumed the essence of her own art. It is a deeply philosophical work, yet most of that is hidden in the art, so it makes an exciting art-thriller set in a student world. I could instantly relate to it ... a familiar world of study, university, friends, and driving ambition to find fundamental secrets. The magic allows this world to become invaded without seeming unbelievably weird. The unsettling power of the narrative comes from de Lint withholding the truth, making us wonder, when we mostly know the truth but a seed of doubt keeps us engaged. This subtlety, combined with conflicted characters, puts us on edge and we must read to the end to find resolution to the distress.

The books could have contained all of this, and still been mediocre. What lifts it to the level of mastery (and to the very TOP of my writer's bookshelf) is the wisdom and truth de Lint shares, due to his lifetime of artistic practice. The story serves to demonstrate his understanding. Reading is more than entertaining, it is enlightening. In this respect, the story outclasses Tolkien and Hobb and any fantasy world I have encountered. Not due to the world-building—there are more elaborate and awesome worlds—or scale, or even systems of magic (which is not particularly revolutionary). It is the artistry of the writing, the style, that so enthralls me.

He could have achieved this with just Isobelle's story, yet in these 600 pages there is another story, told through a diary and memory, of Kathy, the writer. This allows de Lint to explore the relationship between artists and writers, how their craft differs and the poignant and heartbreaking legacy of abuse, the spirit to create and the will to live. I found de Lint's perspective on these issues unique and troubling. He spoke to my soul. Kathy's tale twines through Isobelle's and broadens the emotional range; a subtle kind of world-building.

If this is a fantasy novel, it is of an entirely different genre to sword and sorcery. Yet it deals with magic, and an altered reality. The magic is of her own making. The story is of her own making. The brilliance of it is ... Charles de Lint.

Lilia says

Did I say that each Newford book I read, leaves me craving for more?

Such touching characters human and magical, all mixes up in one and brings up memories. Through the characteristics & traits of each the reader can connect to himself, and start thinking of how to become a better person. That's what happened to me anyway. I found this book most familiar to myself and my environment, each page turned personal, but also acknowledging. Many quotes were what I thought but never could put correctly in order or even in words.

It doesn't matter that this story is not mine, but I walked the streets and felt everything, that Charles described as I read along. All this sounds too emotionally attached, for 600 pages. But I did relate to it and I

loved it. Warmly recommended. Though I prefer that the opinion on this book will be only mine, because everyone perceives things differently. And maybe this book is like this only for me.

Myridian says

de Lint is always great at combining the mystical and amazing elements of fantasy with a present day reality that speaks to me as a reader. This book is about Isabelle Copeley and her ability to use her art to "bring across" spirits from some mysterious "before." But at a deeper level, this book is about how we perceive reality, the way our perception alters depending on our ability to reinterpret events, and the seductive dangers of allowing this to happen. For all Isabelle's amazing artistic powers, she is unable to confront the reality of the important people in her life, and this leads to sometimes fatal repercussions. de Lint writes with a somewhat spare, but luscious style that sucked me in and kept me reading, even though his concurrent telling of events from the past and present were rather annoyingly strung together. On the whole though, this book completely redeems de Lint after my disgust at

Jackie "the Librarian" says

Okay, this is one of those books that jumps back and forth from the past to the present day. I guess that fits with the "memory" part of the title.

So far, Isabelle has received a letter that got lost in the mail for five years, mailed by her friend Kathy right before she died. That same day, she is contacted by mutual friend Alan about illustrating a book of Kathy's short stories.

But there's something weird going on with Isabelle, and with her art...

*****Final review, with spoilerish details

While I enjoyed this book, it went on too long, and there were too many "coincidences" jarring me out of my suspension of disbelief for it to be entirely successful. I liked the main plot of paintings being so true they can provide a door for spirits from the place of stories to come into our world. But the characters weren't well developed, despite the length of the story.

Too many events were crammed into the beginning of the narration - Isabelle gets a letter from her deceased roommate, Kathy, that has been lost in the mail for 5 years (no explanation given), and she gets a phone call from Alan, a friend from those days when she roomed with Kathy, on the SAME DAY. He comes out for a visit, still on the same day, and by the next day she's retrieved materials Kathy left for her in a locker in the bus station, packed her art supplies and her cat, and has moved into temporary quarters in Newford, after agreeing to Alan's request to do illustrations for a book of Kathy's stories. Too much, too fast. And for no good reason.

Then we jump back in time, to Isabelle's meeting with her mentor, Rushkin, who taught her the secret of making paintings with enough heart to bring across spirits from another place. Hints are regularly given that Rushkin was a malign influence, that something horrific has happened because of these paintings, and that Isabelle had given up representational art because of it. But the plot is drawn out so gradually that the hints become irritating, rather than intriguing. The framework, with the jumping back and forth to the different time periods, felt artificial to me, an attempt to build suspense that wasn't all that successful.

Along with Isabelle's story, we learn about her roommate, Kathy, who wrote short stories that were as

magical in their way as Isabelle's paintings. We know that Kathy has died, but the details are muddled, because Isabelle is an unreliable narrator. Alan is a mutual friend and an editor who is trying to publish a collection of Kathy's stories, which he hopes Isabelle will illustrate, but there is a legal challenge being brought by Kathy's mother, Margaret Mully. Others have mentioned another weak plot point - the murder of Margaret Mully which moves the plot along, but doesn't make sense.

On top of the regular characters, there are the spirits from Isabelle's paintings, which are called munin. They have their own issues - are they real? Can they create? Can a munin brought through by Isabelle have a real relationship with someone who knows their origin? And what is Rushkin up to with Isabelle's paintings of the munin?

I think the author was too ambitious, and tried to cram too much into the book, and was spread too thin. We have Isabelle's story, Kathy's story, Alan's story, AND the spirits from the paintings. The book is like a souffle that has collapsed under its own weight. It's tasty, but too dense.

Arielle Walker says

Charles de Lint is always a pleasure to read - but it's a pleasure that takes full measure of the darkness that hides in the depths of his stories.

Here it's not hiding: that darkness is in plain view.

I don't know why I didn't remember this when coming back to Memory and Dream - but it's a harder read than even The Onion Girl. In fact, moments of this border almost on horror, though the magic does win out.

I'd also forgotten that this is one of the patchier pieces of his writing, possibly due to the length of the book. Isabel isn't a particularly likeable character at first, though she does have a pretty decent arc, and there are moments of Mary-Sue-ishness (*why* exactly is everyone in love with her?) that are luckily resolved by the third act.

But still: it's Charles de Lint, and it's Newford, and it's a little like coming home after a long, long day.

Jim Leckband says

What if your art became reality? What are your responsibilities to that new reality? Isabelle is a painter that falls under the spell of her new mentor, Rushkin - a troll of a man that makes astonishing paintings. She learns how to extend her gift to such a degree that the subjects come to life (not a spoiler).

While navigating this dream/reality world, Isabelle finds out that there is a yin and yang to this stuff. And this is where de Lint shines - he is not afraid of making the hard choices in bringing the bad stuff of our non-fantasy world into fantasy fiction. That is one of the reasons I continue to read him as opposed to the ilk of "Dragonriders of the Dragon World and the Dragons That They Ride On Through Dragon Stuff" novels (gee, I don't have any prejudices there...).

I see hints of fairy tales (Rumplestiltskin, Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood), doubles like in Dostoyevsky, and of course The Picture of Dorian Gray all mixed in. But it all ends up working quite right in the city of Newford.

Also, this is one of the few novels that really gets what being a visual artist is like. Of all the stuff in de Lint's bio (writing, musician, editor, etc.) I never saw visual arts as being one of his skills. But he writes like he has been through the process. I've read a lot of stuff where the writers had no clue of what goes into creating pictures.

Anita says

I enjoy fantasy, but do not generally read modern urban fantasy, so Memory and Dream was an unusual book choice. I like to read different genres from time to time to hone my own writing skills. This book takes a unique direction for a fantasy story in that it also explores the theme of abuse against women and children. I found the settings in the fictional city of Newford descriptive and credible, but the characters in the story less so. I liked the scenes of the Bohemian artistic district of the city; the sleazy Tomb quarter - the hangout for the dregs of society; - and Wren Island. The author has the ability to place the reader right inside the 'location' he is describing. I think he is less successful with the humans (and numena) in the story. Although I loved the idea of characters from artworks coming to life, I never felt engaged with any of the characters, they were not well-drawn, in spite of the length of the novel. I was not sad when Kathy died, as I never felt I got to know her. Izzy was pathetic with no backbone. As for Alan he really needed to manup, he was constantly blushing and dithering. The policemen were cartoon characters. As for the numena, I never understood what really "brought them over" or where exactly they had been "before". And by the end of the story there were so many of them it became confusing. Also why would Izzy fall in love with John who she had created with her art? She had birthed him after all. The story became even more muddled towards the end with numena appearing and disappearing every few pages like a tawdry magic show. It was too contrived.

The storyline lost its credibility for me due to the multiple coincidences which peppered the plot. I also believe the author tried to cover too many themes.

Some of the prose was beautiful, but it was uneven, occasionally descending into inappropriate slang. The dialogue of the policemen during the arrest of Alan being a prime example.

An interesting introduction for me into the world of urban fantasy.

Lila says

Memory and Dream is richly layered, deep and thought provoking, yet at the same time captivating and enthralling.

Like so many of De Lint's novels, it's rooted in reality and the magic is hidden at first. This enables the reader to get drawn into the story and experience the magic in the same way the protagonists are experiencing it. The end effect is that the supernatural elements seem believable.

This story starts out in the early 90s as the reclusive painter Isabelle Copley receives a letter with a key to a storage locker from Kathy, her best friend since her university days in the 70s. This is rather mysterious because Kathy died 5 years before. Within a few hours Alan, another old university friend, calls requesting that Isabelle illustrate a completion of Kathy's short stories which he plans to publish. The proceeds are to go to the Newford Children's Foundation, which was Kathy's dying wish. We learn that Alan and Isabelle have been estranged since Kathy's death, and that Isabelle has refused to paint any realistic images since a few years before that.

The story then goes back to 1972 when Isabelle, Alan and Kathy are all first year university students. Isabelle starts apprenticing with Vincent Rushkin, Newford's famous and mysterious painter. Rushkin is brilliant but abusive, however he enables Isabelle to work magic through her painting, literally.

Just like the title, there is the constant theme of dreams and memories and how they effect our lives. De lint has magically worked two mythic themes, Pygmalion and the Sorcerers apprentice, into his novel. The story is complex with many surprises and twists in the plot, right until the end where we are back in the 90s and the story becomes thriller-like. To say anymore would be giving away spoilers, so I'll just finish to say that Memory and Dream is a very satisfying read that I highly recommend!

The Newford Series is more like a series of books taking place in the same universe, so they can be read in any order except for the last few books.

Some of the side characters in Memory and Dream are also in #1 Dreams Underfoot, a collection of short stories. However there are no characters from Memory and Dream in #2. The Dreaming Place which is a YA novel. Same for #3 A Whisper To A Scream and #4 I'll Be Watching You which are horror-thrillers and so different from De Lint's usual style that he originally published them under a different name, "Samuel M. Key".(and it still caused quite a controversy I've read).

Although Memory and Dream is technically the 5th book in the Newford series, it's actually the first adult novel and a great place to start this brilliant series without missing any background information!

Margaret says

This is my first de Lint novel, and I have to say, it's one of the best contemporary/urban fantasy novels I've read. Set in the fictional city of Newford, the novel follows the lives of three artists--a painter, a writer, and a publisher--friends and lovers of magic. What I love so much about this novel is how it entwines the trauma of human experience with hope and magic. Though technically the fifth Newford novel, I had no trouble starting with Memory and Dream and will certainly continue with more.

Leah says

I really wanted a fantasy book to read, something I could lose myself in now that the weather's turned grey and rainy, and in that sense, this book didn't disappoint.

It was easy to lose myself in Newford (although, knowing nothing about de Lint's world, I kept wondering if it was a real place or not) and in its arts scene he lovingly describes. It was also easy to lose myself in the community of characters, a kind of fantasy in itself, I suppose. These were all enjoyable things to read, and immerse myself in, and imagine.

What was less enjoyable was the style of writing, the verbosity of the author, the slightly adolescent modes of description. In some ways, the verbosity suited me, as I wanted a long story, but this book could have been two hundred pages shorter if he had wanted it to be. There is a **lot** of reiterating without furthering the story, internal indecision and explanation, external exposition and description. It palls, sometimes. Isabelle is often a little too earnest, and many of her motives are unclear or undeveloped. To have undeveloped themes in a 680 page book seems a little much to me, and yet I'm still unclear on why she would choose to have a romantic relationship with a being for whose existence she was, essentially, responsible.

The entire magical premise of the book was undeveloped, really. The two schools of thought, that the painters created the numena, and that they just 'brought them over', that they were fully responsible for them or that they were on their own, bleated constantly at each other throughout the story and never really settled on a solution or made any progress. It got tiresome.

In the end, there wasn't as much magic in the story as I'd hoped for, but the scene setting, the characters, and the warm and fuzzy fictional world de Lint creates are all things I would like to revisit.

Juushika says

Isabelle is an artist with a unique ability: some of her paintings open a doorway between our world and the otherworld, allowing spirits from the otherworld to enter our. These beings, which she calls her numena, are their own people, with thoughts and feelings of their own. They are also in danger: her mentor, the renowned painter Rushkin who taught her to bring over these beings, poses a threat to both Isabelle and her numena. Events in the present—the publication of her friend Kathy's posthumous book—force Isabelle to return to her memories of the past in order to determine the cause of Kathy's death and protect both herself and her numena from Rushkin's influence. A magical story within our own real world, *Thought and Memory* is skillfully although not exceptionally plotted and written. The plot, pacing, and writing style are all very solid, and the fantastical element is original and creative. This is a good book: not exceptional, not outstanding, but well-written, readable, and solidly carried through to the end.

De Lint's writing style is consistent and strong, so while neither the plot nor the characters are exceptional, this is still a solid and readable book. The basis of the story—magic appearing in the "real world" and Isabelle's numena—is an interesting idea, but seems somewhat unrealistic. If set in a fantasy world, or if appearing in a magical realist text, the fantastical elements would seem more at home; here, in the real non-magical world, they are not naturally accepted by the characters. However, the characters, including those that are introduced to the numena very abruptly, all seem to accept the existence of magic as it suits the plot. This gives both plot and characters a contrived, self-serving sense, limiting the veracity of the book.

Adding to this the fact that the characters are not exceptionally realistic, detailed, or groundbreaking, and that the plot doesn't provide too much food for thought, and the underlying aspects of this book are interesting but not particularly fulfilling. Dilemmas aren't troubling, character growth isn't empowering.

De Lint's writing style is constant and strong, even when the book leaves the realms of memory and delves into the surprisingly active period of the now. While not quotable or exceptional, the writing is readable, well paced, and consistent throughout, and this strength supports the rest of the book. The ending could easily deteriorate into an empty action sequence, but (to my surprise) never does. The author successfully pulls the plot concept through to the end, making the book a satisfying read. As a whole, this is a very competent text, readable and entertaining, but not outstanding or memorable. I don't recommend it one way or the other: this is a fine book, but not compelling, and doesn't warrant recommending—or warning away from. Read it if you want, but you're not missing much if you skip it.

Stephen says

4.5 stars. Beautifully written, with superbly drawn characters and a very original fantasy element. Loved it. Highly recommended.
