

10-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Rogers, Amanda (2009) "Memories Painted Dorian Grey," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 29: No. 9, Article 53.
Available at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol29/iss9/53>

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Memories Painted Dorian Gray

Amanda Rogers

I went for a run today, but decided, about a mile into it, to walk instead. I walked back toward where I used to live, where the spring calls memories that echo like ghosts.

I walked passed the houses with perfect lawns and tress sprouting pink and white, like a fairytale in scented 3D. I walk past those houses that aren't really houses, to where grass grows between the cracks in the asphalt and cars run on roars and hic-cups. I pass a streetlight with a thousand memories, the spotlight for a hundred acts. Act 4, Scene 3, Six kids enter stage right, laughing under the snow. Young girl opens mouth under light to catch snowflake as boy slides across the ice on the road.

This place is haunted.

It's smaller, even though I was bigger then and the perimeters are the same. All the blinds are open, and I see someone watching TV in my old house. I remember when that kid set our mat on fire. I remember when Alicia went home for Christmas and I went to bed early on New Years.

"God," I think, "I wasn't even raised here." I distantly consider driving to our old house in Indiana. I think about what ghosts might crawl from beneath the floor-boards, what memories might seep from the sidewalks.

And then I'm looking at the pond where we went and I cried so hard in the snow, under her arms. And she asked what they had done to me.

I wish I could go back and replace the silence.

I wish I could have said, "Nothing. They did nothing." But, instead, I wasted two years trying to answer the question.

Instead, those streets are haunted with half memories and whole regrets.

I walk home, away from the old smells and the old history. I think how old I must be, to remember such a distant time where people dressed and talked differently. How old I must be to have lived through the changing of the trees and colors.

And I wonder what I've exchanged it all for—all the numb cynicism and hazy intuition. What is it I've gained? A handful of bad eighties songs and a patient sort of faith?

And then I consider all the faces I can't remember.

And think,

Maybe it's not such a bad trade.