

Contemporary Writers' Forum, University of Siegen, April 30:

some student workshop poems: "I remember the student/friend/teacher who..."

I remember the student who
took the wrong bus
wandered through
the door of a roadside
slaughterhouse
and sat down

He learned so much
from the carcasses
hanging from the top
that after three years
he had a degree
in afterlife literacy

I remember the friend who was.
Was with me,
like wind and storm.
We simply were.
No "why", "how", "where".

Something broke,
like shattering glass,
went cold.
I plunged through the ice,
drowned in black waters.

She didn't come,
to make me fly.

I remember the girl who dyed her hair bright red, shiny and brilliant like tulips in
spring
The girl who never just spoke but always screamed because no one was listening to
her
The girl who wore a pink dress and leopard shoes to her grandfather's funeral
The girl who dyed her hair white like oleander to look just as poisonous
I remember the girl who always had a special glow around her
like the moon in a clear summer's night
And never knew about it

I remember the friend whom
I shared my life with.
She used to be my closest sister, a soulmate;
now she is a stranger far away,
but constantly part of my thoughts.
I won't be able to make her disappear.
I remember every day, I remember
every hour.

I remember the girl who always seemed to be invisible. Invisible in the way she walked, invisible in the way she dressed, invisible in the way she was sitting next to me. Her hair was long – its colour I cannot even define: brown, blonde – something in between. Her body: small, almost fragile. Her eyes grey like a cloudy day. She never smiled. I cannot remember ever having heard her talk. She was only there. But was she really there? No one cared about her. I don't even know why I remember her. Perhaps because a person no one seems to recognize, no one seems to know, is fascinating. What was in her mind while she was looking out of the window? What was she thinking about during her lonely way home? Why did she never say a word? Why was she such a mystery to me?

I remember the student who was always very polite
and all, and she smiled
(a lot)
but there was always something a little off
although it was hard to describe

It was not the way her lips parted
or the twinkle in her eyes
or the gentle movement of her head

It was rather something in the general composition
that left you with the feeling you get
when you watch the new Star Wars
and you realize that you can't replace the puppets
with CGI animation

But you were never able to catch the notion
so you kept quiet
the feeling of uneasiness you felt
when she swooped through the hallways
with her long blonde hair
trailing behind her

And you never asked

I remember the student who
always sat on that
particular spot of
green grass during break
and his gesture when I
walked by, with my bag in one hand,
as if he wanted to reach me or
maybe just greet me –
I don't know which I would have preferred.

But I remember his face, dark and in
detail
with closed eyes; mine

or his.

And I remember the day when he was
suddenly gone
and I watched as the
spot of green grass
slowly turned brown.

I remember the student who read cheap comic books
of heroes or villains and sometimes even both.
Always hid from his grandmother who, on weekdays, insisted
on brand name skin moisturizer.

Now he chases cars
and two weeks of vacation
orders books that help him convince all around him
that he is no kid anymore
the books tell him to grow up
and just not care for anything
but a Cuban cigar.

Now he doesn't read comics and doesn't care much
for anything but a Cuban cigar.

I remember a little girl
playing in a sandbox
careless about anything
which could hurt her

Her rosy cheeks longing
to be stroked by
knowing hands

Her imagination giving
pictures and dreams to her
for free

I see her leaping
through fields of green
and endless seas of colorful buds

I still see her
falling
vanishing
not returning
from the
endlessness

I remember the man who played guitar
in a tube station in London
tones forming a warm melody
that hugs people passing by
only one minute
before they fade and are lost
in the rhythms of everyday life

I remember the homeless man who
lived in my street.
A modern homeless person he was
and well respected as it seemed.
When you came down the stairs,
opened the gigantic gate
and stepped out on the scene
where you always had to watch out
not to slip on some pitbull-pile of shit
he was already there
with his long dirty grey beard and his glasses
he was painting portraits.
Sitting. Sometimes also shitting.
DVD player, cell phone and laptop he could call his own,
always busy as it seemed.
The local bars supplied him with fresh green pasta
that you could be jealous of
such an enticing smell.
When night replaced the day,
he disappeared under a dirty pile of blue-grey sheets
or wandered around in this medieval town.
Nightshopping with his supermarket cart.

I remember the traveller who
had been here and there
seen mountains and bridges
and castles and oceans
eating sushi and kangaroo steak
and fried insects and baguettes
making acquaintance with novelists
and bus drivers and presidents
when he saw a tiny purple flower
glorious in its frame of bright green.
He stopped
gently stroking its leaves he fed it
the rest of the water
from his far-travelled drinking bottle