

Literatur in den Sprachen Berlins 2023

Alice Miller

Four Poems

Im englischen Original

The Picnic

The picnic outside the window (with select
guests) carries on long after the sun
goes down, it carries
into night, bleeds into morning,
and trickles through days, one long with a sunset
and crowds, another brief and pained, the picnic
outside the window
began on the first day of spring,

so warm it was more like summer
in a city in Germany we were all borrowing, and a woman
said there was an ice-cream truck parked
at the back of the clocktower,
and around that time many brides showed up
to walk up the castle steps and be photographed
on that day of days
and although the brides would usually

irritate us, at that stage nothing was irritating, everything irradiated
even after the sun had gone, sunk, burned out,
the planet ruined,
the echo of laughter continued
as we became mothers and
grandmothers and great-great ancestors
after the deathless apparatus
was invented so we could look on
as our children's children's

children told jokes under glass
and people laughed
with age-old desperation
at the residual ruins from the quieter
now but still ongoing picnic
outside the window

Inside

Everything's gripped inside someone else
it feels in the weeks after the body's stopped
and the drugs do not expel the embryo,
it holds on with what's left of its
ghost-fingers, and refuses to let go
until the surgeon comes to pry it free.

Everything's inside something, woman in
room, thoughts in head, bed in
ward. Everything's inside, and I can't decide
if this is a good thing or not.

But it's neither, "of course", good nor bad,
as the surgeon comes and loosens out
the body. No longer inside,
but outside, of nothing. Destroyed or never
there. Floating. In my head, at least,

a thought, at least. Across the way, a baby
cries, a sound so ordinary. All so ordinary,
inside. It's only what's outside that must be let free.

A King

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it feels in the weeks after the body's stopped
and the drugs do not expel the embryo,
it holds on with what's left of its
ghost-fingers, and refuses to let go
until the surgeon comes to pry it free.

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a thought, at least. Across the way, a baby
cries, a sound so ordinary. All so ordinary,
inside. It's only what's outside that must be let free.

Cursors

Cold enough I feel the shadows
of people passing. Another grasps another.
A pandemic's upside's most strangers
don't come close. Many think twice
before they hover over
like a cursor waiting to click.

The sun'll go soon and the ice'll crack
and the oceans'll build like stadiums.

Gulls stutter, skint music trickles, these grey cranes
pinch the blue and cream sky
as if poised to tug cobwebs from cloud.

Why not bring someone into this world?
Isn't the pattern on the water enough?

We've named him after someone who's drowning.

One icescape snatches
a gull's reflection,
another grasps another.

Alice Miller is a writer from Aotearoa, New Zealand. She is the author of the novel »More Miracle than Bird« (Tin House) and three poetry collections, »What Fire« (Pavilion), »Nowhere Nearer« (Pavilion and Auckland University Press), and »The Limits« (Shearsman and AUP). A graduate of the International Institute of Modern Letters and the Iowa Writers' Workshop, she has received a Glenn Schaeffer fellowship, the Royal Society of New Zealand Manhire Prize, a fellowship at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, and has also travelled to Antarctica courtesy of Antarctica New Zealand.