



Nowhere
Nearer

ALICE MILLER

*Doesn't language get tired?
Doesn't it get sick of
lulling us into believing
all the *** we say?*

*Isn't love also the kind of cruelty
you give to someone because you can't hold
all that cruelty in your own hands?
All I know's I'm overflowing.
All I know's I'm overflowing and I'm not sure
how much of me the world can hold. – From 'Epilogue'*

In *Nowhere Nearer* Alice Miller takes us inside a European world full of ruins and memories, haunted by Sigmund Freud and Eva Braun, betrayals and loss. Miller's poetry is clear and brittle, full of glass doors that spit the sun back. It is deeply ruminative, rich with the circularity of thought, the company of the dead, and the lure of alternative futures. And Miller's second collection is also powerfully personal.

Since you left me I walk around here a lot.

*I'm not dead, either. To be not dead,
I claim, is the most marvellous thing in the world.*

These poems rip into pockets of histories, trying to change facts and voices, searching for the word's version of music's home key. They dare you to visit, through a series of cities, the futures we never let happen.

'Alice Miller looks hard at history's terrifying straight lines, yet time and again turns to the obsessive, sometimes redemptive circlings of art. She knows that in a universe ruled by time and death, words can both rescue and destroy us, sometimes in a single utterance.' – BILL MANHIRE



Alice Miller is a writer from New Zealand living in Berlin. She is a graduate of the International Institute of Modern Letters and the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Miller has received the BNZ Katherine Mansfield Award, the Royal Society of New Zealand Manhire Prize and a Glenn Schaeffer Fellowship, and has travelled to Antarctica courtesy of Antarctica New Zealand. She has been a resident at the Michael King Centre, Massey University, the Grimshaw Sargeson Centre, as well as the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Germany. Her first collection was *The Limits* (Auckland University Press, 2014). An edition of her poems with a German translation, *Blaue Stunde*, was published in 2016. *Nowhere Nearer* is published by Pavilion in the UK, where it is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation.

Observatory

Across from the observatory,
under cream cloud, what is it
death does when it undoes—the gradual unravel of a brain,
or a switch's flick to click off thought?

Before me, I love the muddy canal,
love the fact that before Dante
enters Hell he meets a leopard.

I see leaves and a giant lamp
made to resemble the moon. Hung above
the observatory. Clouds pull in more clouds.

How easy it is to glance and see nothing. How easy to spend
our time puzzling how to spend our time.
Young boys run past, serious for their bodies,
and in a breath of heat and sweat they're gone.

Night comes for the ten thousandth time, sky growing
muddy with cloud, light squeezed out.
Are you there, a man says into his phone.
A magnificent storm is coming.

Zentralfriedhof

Would you like to visit a famous grave?
Good. Sit down. Admire your future:

burned bones, green furred stone. Remember being part
of an empire? Good. It is something you will

tell others while you live. It is something you will say
you belong to. The songs they are singing on the mount

are no longer yours, but that does not matter.
Do not look on anything, do not despair.

You will ask to leave here soon enough.

Europe

Today, you say, and all the stones can hear you
each building with its ankles, nape, and bones
watches with its stone-eyes for your footsteps and holds its
closer to its dome they listen to sopranos who've trained
to glide a flightless note through this stone sky –
but we will not feign a smoothness,
we'll *push past*, like a kid impatient, refer to others'
rhythms of breath, *beyond* our shifting
grain of skin and eyes – because today,
you say, another man was buried
(*push past*) and the stones may hear but only we
speak back. And we are unsolved
and unsalvageable
and when we go we cannot take our ruins.

What's Gone Blue

Five am in Amsterdam, canal reflects bridge till
windows go mirror. This morning I've
gone full blue while cranes sit high
on skylines. Somewhere creatures fall
in love, their blood rushing 'round their body's canals
and the trees around us all fall too.
We are too sensible, we say. We have love, need
not fall. No one's gone. No one falls.

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