When I Am Coming To Terms They Come

Alice Miller
WHEN I AM COMING TO TERMS THEY COME

When I am coming to terms they come, and I watch them slosh by the window. This is a wooden block of time which blackens at sky and ground. We can’t stop winding up yelling from the backs of trucks, on our way to one border or another. I can’t keep tracks; they flee from me.

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I have forgotten the range of our instruments. Today they only crane their necks to stare, refuse to make sound: the cello balking at the double-stop; the trumpet bowed over, clutching its mute.

Tonight I’m sitting, trying to coax the piano into articulating its complaint. The keys stubborn. Each wait between notes just sprays us with want. We stab at maps, with sucked-on fingers. The silence is landlocking. I am merging onto several highways. I am, in principle, open to strangers. Still the spaces keep growling for something.
Tonight down skinny streets in a city, all the adults are doubled over the cobbles, laughing or crying I’m not quite sure; I’ve forgotten how to get close.

Instead I bob up and down like a meerkat, peering into letterboxes and down and down dresses; sometimes I fall over myself, and this can no longer be an accident. We shouldn’t be standing at an ATM. We shouldn’t drink from rivers shouldn’t fill ourselves with thoughts of giardia crawling through our bodies’ linings. Still, there’s only a snatch of a minute left till my mind reverts back to its mirrorings. I only hope in the interim something may’ve snapped.

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I look out, and the terms are still sloshing by our window, past cobwebs nestled in hedges like fog. Barely there. I fashion some antlers to guard my brain. I fashion some worlds built of bits of sound I’ve captured—a radio’s bristling; a sticky lock’s turning; bare cough
from the last truck out of the forest—and I keep the thought (the hope?) that these sounds, these small attempts at breath, might hold us.