

And Yet the Books  
By Czeslaw Milosz

And yet the books will be there on the shelves, separate beings,  
That appeared once, still wet  
As shining chestnuts under a tree in autumn,  
And, touched, coddled, began to live  
In spite of fires on the horizon, castles blown up,  
Tribes on the march, planets in motion.  
"We are, " they said, even as their pages  
Were being torn out, or a buzzing flame  
Licked away their letters. So much more durable  
Than we are, whose frail warmth  
Cools down with memory, disperses, perishes.  
I imagine the earth when I am no more:  
Nothing happens, no loss, it's still a strange pageant,  
Women's dresses, dewy lilacs, a [song](#) in the valley.  
Yet the books will be there on the shelves, well born,  
Derived from people, but also from radiance, heights.

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