ALMOND TREE

I miss smashing the green-covered shells, peeling the bitter skin, putting the slippery seed on my tongue.

I miss the outhouse. I miss the wind blowing through the hole in the floor.

I miss the small door to the fallen balcony and the swallows’ nests and their tunnels stuck to the stone.

I miss the smell of fried eggs, potatoes, and cheese.

I miss the wood-paneled radio with the voices From Tirane and Skopje.

I miss the dogs at midnight and the church gates and the steep forest behind the cemetery.

I miss the bundles of tree limbs, the crackling fires, the crazy bright fields of tan and clover.

I miss going down hills on wood sleds made from old chairs, greased with pig lard.

I miss the barbed wire fence around the orchard and climbing the cherry trees and watching ants on the bark and flicking them off my fingers.

I miss the spring water. I miss the plug to the tap to the spring water, the cloth and wood.

I miss the walk to the spring. I miss the black sky. I miss the ghosts in the holy air.

--Tryfon Tolides
THERE WILL BE A FUTURE

There will be rain, there will be feasts, there 
will be bonfires, chestnut husks will crack, 
there will be shouts, someone will hide in the bushes, 
someone will trip over a cherrystone, 
a smell of gas and lilacs in the air. 
There will be laughter, there will be cries, prayers, demure 
and silent lies, there will be a future, 
only you will stay here, in this second- 
class waiting room at the railroad station, dark with 
cigar smoke, under the portrait of the Austrian Emperor.

--Adam Zagajewski
Translated by Clare Cavanagh
This hour along the valley this light at the end
of summer lengthening as it begins to go
this whisper in the tawny grass this feather floating
in the air this house of half a life or so
this blue door open to the lingering sun this stillness
 echoing from the rooms like an unfinished sound
this fraying of voices at the edge of the village
 beyond the dusty gardens this breath of knowing
without knowing anything this old branch from which
years and faces go on falling this presence already
far away this restless alien in the cherished place
this motion with no measure this moment peopled
with absences with everything that I remember here
 eyes the wheeze of the gate greetings birdsongs in winter
the heart dividing dividing and everything
 that has slipped my mind as I consider the shadow
all this has occurred to somebody else who has gone
 as I am told and indeed it has happened again
and again and I go on trying to understand
 how that could ever be and all I know of them
is what they felt in the light here in this late summer

— W.S. Merwin
WHAT WILL REMAIN?

What will remain of the white cloud’s offering?
--An elderberry blossom
What will remain of the blue wave’s drizzle?
--The cadence of time
What will remain of the hemorrhage of a green idea?
--Water in holm oak veins
What will remain of the tears of love?
--A soft tattoo in violet
What will remain of the dust of searching for a meaning?
--The path of ardor
What will remain of the road of the great journey to the unknown?
--The traveler’s song to the horse
What will remain of dream’s mirage?
--The sky’s trace on the violin
What will remain of thing meeting with nothing?
--Divinity’s sense of security
What will remain of the Arabic poet’s speech?
--A chasm…and a thread of smoke
What will remain of your own speech?
--A necessary forgetfulness of the memory of place!

--Mahmoud Darwish
Translated by Fady Joudah