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The Trees

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THE TREES

The trees that I see from my window
appear not to have changed.
But they have. One of the tallest
is broken, and now we don't remember
what a great wall of green it made.
Others have a disease.
The earth does not breathe enough.
The hedges hardly have time
to put out their new leaves
before August clogs them with dust
and October with smoke.
The garden's history and the city's
are not of interest. We have no time
to sketch the leaves or the insects
or to sit in the white light
hour after hour, working.
The trees don't seem to have changed,
they look true to their kind.
And yet they have been carried
far away. Not even a cry,
not even a sigh is heard.
This is no cause for despair,
my daughter, but for understanding
while together we look at the trees
and you learn who your father is.

*translated by
Michael Hamburger*

IN MEMORIAM I

Once you asked me what was on my mind
and I did not reply.
But it's become very difficult
to talk of last things, my mother.