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Native Trees

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Native Trees · *W.S. Merwin*

Neither my father nor my mother knew
the names of the trees
where I was born
what is that what is that
I asked even then but my
father and mother
did not hear they did not look where I said
surfaces of furniture held
the careful attention of their fingers
and across the room they could watch
horizons they had forgotten
where there were no questions
no voices and no shade
Were there trees
where they were children were there trees
where I had not been I asked
were there trees in those places where
my father and my mother were born
were there trees in that time and did
my father and my mother see them
and when they said yes it meant
they did not remember
What were they I asked what were they
but both my father and my mother
said they never knew