

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