

Naming Prompt

Let today's poem have to do with names or naming

I Thought Taxonomy Could Tell Me About The World

As if genus species could tell me
the essence of what I held in my hand,
I loved nomenclature, my brain stuffed
with Latin names, the exact arrangement
of leaves, the number of legs, the hardness
on a scale of one to ten. I was looking closely
to know what I was seeing, but it wasn't the truth
of what I was feeling as I waded underwater
with the seaweed or sat in the high branches
of the Copper Beech watching clouds above
and bugs beside me. Those dry descriptive names
or people proclaiming they discovered something
that was already there. Those were not the names
of the essence of things, not in resonance
with beings wild and free, that know
their own names deep inside, names
that vibrate out into the universe
singing in the space between atoms.

Kim Kaufman

Naming

Let me tell you this once
(I will not be able to say it again):
I have lost the meaning of words.
Heavy, they ripped away from the sounds,
fell into cracked ground. For weeks
I scratched but what I dug up was

bicycle spokes, black melon rinds,
a smashed doll face— it was not meaning.
I don't know what I am saying.

I exaggerate. Not everything is gone.
I still know perfectly what sugar means,
and pine needle. Laughter is more
of a problem. And yellow often slides,
a plate of butter in the sun.
The meaning of flower has gone entirely;
so has the meaning of love. Now it is safe
to say: I love you. Now it is true.

Nancy Mairs
anthologized in *What Have You Lost?*
poems selected by Naomi Shihab Nye

What We Are Named For

To say what or where we came from has nothing to do with what or
where we came from. We do not come from there any more, but
only from each word that proceeds out of the mouth of the unnamed.

And yet sometimes it is our only way of pointing to who we are.

W.S. Merwin
in *The Book of Fables*

The Naming of Cats

(after listing possible “sensible everyday names” Eliot wrote:)

But I tell you, a cat needs a name that's particular,
A name that's peculiar, and more dignified,
Else how can he keep up his tail perpendicular,
Or spread out his whiskers, or cherish his pride?
Of names of this kind, I can give you a quorum,
Such as Munkustrap, Quaxo, or Coricopat,

Such as Bombalurina, or else Jellylorum—
Names that never belong to more than one cat.
But above and beyond there's still one name left over,
And that is the name you will never guess;
The name no human research can disc over—
But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never confess.
When you notice a cat in profound meditation,
the reason I tell you is always the same:
His mind is engaged in rapt contemplation
of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of his name:
His ineffable, effable
Effanineffable
Deep and inscrutable singular name.

T.S. Eliot

in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*