

Prayer for Naming and Claiming

Naming the Trees

At the national cemetery in Gettysburg
all the trees have names,
both family and genus
on small brass plaques at the base of each
to let the visitor know
the kind of oak,
whether red, white or black,
and is this rock or silver maple
looking once like any other
burlapped ball of roots
when it was lowered to earth
those decades after the war.

Colorful names like Tulip Poplar,
Weeping Beech, Buckeye,
Sweet Gum and Ginkgo—
sounding like nicknames almost, these trees
from every region and state
with broad leaves or skinny,
shiny, dull, or no leaves at all
like the Eastern Hemlock,
but all, all with names every one,
no matter the size and shape
amidst the many anonymous
mute stones in their shade.

Bruce Guernsey

Litany of Naming and Claiming

Formerly Enslaved Members of SPC

Samuel

Harriet

Joseph

Richard

Courtney

Jerry

Harriet

Jacob

Elias

Horace

Judith

Hannah

Ailsey

Susan

Nancy

Sophia

Mary

Jesse