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Poetry as a Lesson in Zoology

A cat is a poem that walked
On four legs, the heron with two,
And the fish and snake with none.
Numbers create the arrangements
Of our kingdom: Everyone learns to adore
Many but never the same things.
Except fireflies, perhaps, or marmosets.
But would it remain true that what follows
After everything remarkable
Is still remarkable when it changes?
See this egg a week later,
See this cicada a day after.
There is a pecking order
To what we insist we believe,
And yet only a few of us notice
There is strength in the wings
Of a hummingbird, the memory
Of the albatross cruising continents,
The dreams cast in every web
By the spider. If we only knew
What geckos practice behind wall clocks
And picture frames, we'd probably grasp
The nature of our secrecies,
Why we always do what we do:
To empty ourselves as would a butterfly
Struggle out of a cocoon, credulous
Of the beasts and fowls of the world.
Did you hear that? It is the call not only
Of the wild but also of the timid, the giraffes
And the whales, the impalas
And the swans, the magnificent

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But of the silent grace.
There is only so much we could
Name from what we can hear,
See and hold, yet neither scale
Nor feather, neither stripe nor spot,
Could tremble our being creatures
Of habit: to seek and to capture,
To claim what is never ours.

Note: The poem first appeared in issue 39 of *ANI: The Philippine Literary Yearbook*
(Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2016)