

## **Danaus Plexippus**

The grass was polished aventurine, / through nacreous light, / inside the white  
border / of a photograph. The foreground: a butterfly, / wings autumn colored,  
crimson and orange / burnt, amber eyelets laced with black, / perching on the  
shoulder / of a boy. I see tousled halo / of hair, soft blue eyes / fixed. A glimpse / of  
the wings' underside: worn leather / with white punctuation—additional eyes. / In  
the background: A black-frame bike / with bright flashes—naked / metal around the  
bolt-holes / where the training wheels used to be. / If I tilt the picture just right, / my  
face covers his. I look at myself—my face / in spring soil, forever blooming. /  
Reflected back, a face / peering, wrinkled, opaque. My child-face / like seeing a  
shooting / star or magic trick for the first time. / Would my child-self scare it away? /  
I ambled all over the backyard, / testing its loyalty. No movement I made / seemed  
to startle it. / Even tilting my shoulder and my face, / as towards the sun, / feeling its  
legs bristle / tentatively on my skin / so close the antennae shivered / in my breath,  
did not shatter / this crystalline moment—a slam, / my mother's surprised metallic  
laughter, / the screen door, her rush / inside to find / the camera: with my eyes /  
wide its wings flex / and for its own reasons / the butterfly flew off.