



Maryann Corbett

Butterfly Unit

Old equivalents:
insect metamorphosis
and the grade-school class

blundering with me
through a weed-choked patch along
railroad rights-of-way,

plucking milkweed plants.
On fat leaves, *Danainae*
bug-adolescents

hunch, gorging, brainless
motor-mouths on sixteen legs,
to be seized and press-

ganged to middle-schools.
Clown-clad and ridiculous,
writhing their own rules,

in the end they close
off all contact, lacquered to
one long, studied pose –

held, the way one holds
breath, waiting to see what form
so much thought unfolds.

Later, on school lawns,
whoops of pleasure will set free
gold-and-sable gowns.

Old, the lesson here.
Teachers stand and clap as lives
lurch, lift, disappear.

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