

Catherine Bayly

Wait and Collect

Collecting carcasses of butterflies from swing sets,
and cupping them home in trembling palms,
I crucify them on sheets of scrap velvet, black
and textured with imprints of their sisters' spans

that my hands have turned to dust with stroking,
and I wear a strip of glass that magnifies, blasts
an image at my eyes when I turn my head
and one furry thorax, stretched like a Christ belly,

is close enough to disappear inside my throat
as I gasp, *Jesus*, and go back to stringing one up
by a hook on the ceiling.

 Standing in the doorway
to my study, you watch them twirl as I tool
over a marigold cadaver, stretching its wings

that held wind yesterday and staking it down
with pins that I pluck from a dusty bassinet
that you built, that's waited years for the heft
of warm child, and that I stained with my hands,

faded flesh file of my prints catacombs now
of dust, scales, and fragile bones, and you
too say *Jesus* and *I brought your lunch* and
you have to eat it and *we're still young*.