

EVELINE PYE

The Butterfly Effect

In the flower power sixties, a flutter
of butterflies flashed black-rimmed wings
— tiny stained glass windows

grabbing sunlight, a kaleidoscope
of peacocks, adonis blues, red admirals,
purple hairstreaks, orange tips.

This abundance is no trick of memory
airbrushing childhood summers
— it's decimation recorded

for half a century by volunteers
who squatted in damp grass
counting absence on clipboards.

Sensitive to changes in climate
in warmer winters, adults emerge
from chrysalides too soon, cling on

unable to flap their frosted wings
or suck nectar through straw tongues
die rigid as sugar confections.

We order a cup of caterpillars
and three weeks later, release
five painted ladies. In chaos theory,

one butterfly can flap its wings,
turn a tornado in Texas —
who knows what five will achieve.