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A Way of Seeing

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A Way of Seeing

When I saw the first
monarch of mid-summer,
so transfixed was I by its dark orange wings,

I hesitated for what may
have been an eternal instant, when
I said aloud, *Monarch*, and it flew around me,

as it might around milkweed
pod, although the milkweed has
not quite ripened here in mid-July. It floated

around me like a friend,
an ally; it settled on the ground, to display its
wings, fanning them open, fanning them closed,

then leaving them unfolded,
to reveal the small finger-length of black
thorax and abdomen, the white spots bejeweling

the black rims of its wings
that divide the lush orange,
as if they were panes of stained glass, fanned

and fanned again,
as if to say, *How well made; how*
orange my wings that migrate south thousands of miles;

or maybe I spoke
those words aloud, no matter;
because, when I moved, the monarch rose up,

and sauntered across
summer air. I stopped, breathed in
a reminder of the morning, a brightness and

fulfillment vanishing;
endangered and soon extinct, as
when we look and see, there in the empty air.

Wally Swist

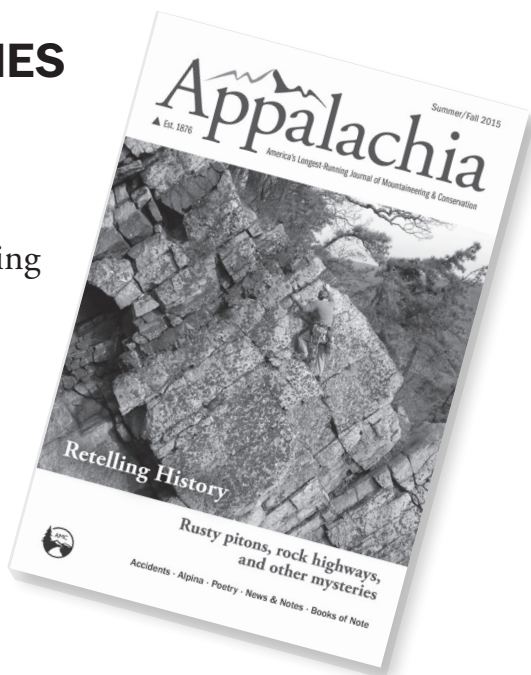
WALLY SWIST's books include *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012) and *Daodejing: An Interpretation*, with David Breeden and Steven Schroeder (Lamar University Press, 2014). His new poems appear in *Commonweal* and *North American Review*.

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