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Monarchs & Homeric Thought

There are Monarchs roaming the eastern-side of the Rockies. Some are about to land on milkweed in Texas, or rest on flower nectar in the fields of Oklahoma. Monarchs often pose their wings on vines, flapping out their canopy of orange and black veins, their six legs clinging to the crown of prairie flowers. Monarchs are simply the supreme aviators of the Nymphalidae world, flying through rain, the deep canyons of Mexico. They adapt their technique of flight as mimicry, or dread, fearing a disappearance of milkweed as chainsaws rip through the Amazon. And so aligning their paths with the earth's magnetic field, they rouse themselves to birth new Monarchs in Hawaii, Australia or New Zealand (where milkweed grows). One has great respect for this butterfly, the many naturalists, and all the universities who have brought you this and you make a note to self that forethought is the electricity of learning. One butterfly, especially named Danaus after the great-great-granddaughter of Zeus, flew to him as a shower of golden petals. Imagine the gorgeous trail of her bright orange gown, dusting him down with its edges of velvet, its accent of pearls. Zeus more likely, at that very moment, and distracted by the calm landing of her appearance, possibly thought about the hopelessness of war, the calamity of another god's ruin, or his position on the throne causing him sleepless nights. Vexation brought to a halt in the beautiful flutter of golden wings. And what of Homer? In The Odyssey he speaks of black wine, the sky as bronze, a wine-dark sea, and darkening Cyclops' purple sheep. And the most incredible thing that you could imagine is that in 1100 BC he saw the colours of fruits and berries in the palette of fields and trees, especially the colour of a bee's hard labour in a Monarch's wing.