CIRCULATORY SYSTEMS

Dan Beachy-Quick

Mouth open, I keep my mouth in knots…

> …am I
the sweet sap inside the aphid's green tomb,
  aphid's body, am I become…

> …that drop of glue
stops the ant from speaking, keeps the ant
  against the tree where the aphids…

> …mumble,
my fingers spoke my mouth inside those thinnest veins.
  Blood in single-file walks, *pulse*, walks…

> …leaves pulse
loose on shafts, wind's circulation, breath
  of ants is not a breath at all, but…

> …lower jaws
pinch the heartwood, sap slowest, softest
  when I dismiss from bark my mouth…

> …inside the tree
I stopped myself from speaking. Ants grow
  Wings when the system stops…

> …keep the aphids
fat, milk-heavy, a green vein on brown bark
  until the tree says, "No. I don't know"…

...I know I know (I must).
I hold Elm's knotted branch in my hand's knotted branch.
   Both of us, we slowed...

          ...my network,
I owned a hand, I owned a vein inside my hand,
   I owned a map to the Elm tree's...

          ...leaves ants carry
in their jaws, the leaf is dead, not them, that swallowed
   aphids whole. My mouth I closed...

          ...on ants
a whir of wings southwards swarm, my lips
   I'd clip their wings between...

          ...A word due, a
word's wind enough to blow the ant to ground,
   (a little toe's enough to make my point)...

          ...stumbled, "No.
I don't know." The ants that ate the tree
   's limit of sap, a wrist limits by a pulse...

          ...I am two gates:
a wrist is corridor, a wrist shuts doors, a mouth
   locks air inside and out. I want...

          ...out. Ants vanished.
Aphids eaten. Sapless tree. Am I become
   That drop of glue, that small adhesive...

          ...stuck inside
myself, am I that drop of glue that holds
   the moist lips shut...shut the pulse, ours...

Where sweet wood opens, sap is suture—
(My lips) the wood sours
(Mouth, mine)   stiffens to close.