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.