

## Poem from Hölderlin

Susan Stewart

*As from dark orchard leaves, from quiet scripts  
where each shape sends its tendril reaching--  
circle and line, the swaddled bud, the petiole  
sprung, an envelope tendered.*

By a window, the infant  
turns, rooting  
toward the breast,  
                    sun-lit,  
the mother humming.  
(Those far things, sources  
of power and  
regret, cliffs and waves,  
continue  
at a distance.)

            Here you'll find  
a name scrawled in the bark--  
last words, left to chance  
and strangers. There,  
the black ant, burdened  
by a crumb, and the weight  
of her lacquered armor,  
crossing—climbing,  
switching, doubling  
back—gnarl and crevice  
and cul de sac.

Pinch-waisted,  
driven on, and trembling,  
does she have a notion  
of her own, or is it  
only species  
memory—so  
fearless, so abstract?

*because it is winter everywhere,  
I spin my cocoon  
I dig my heart a grave*

Indifferent, a blossom  
drifting, the knob swelling,  
the leaf turned to  
shadow: filigree, smudged.  
The petiole now brittle in  
the first cold nights.

The burden, relieved,  
weighs all the more from the guilt  
of its release.  
Too light, too light, like a sudden  
waking, the sun in your eyes:  
you cannot see for it.

How long will we live  
in this leaf-strewn place,  
thinking we belong  
to the sky?