

## *After Rilke: To Holderlin*

*In memory of Michael Donaghy*

We may not stay, not even with the most familiar things.  
 No sooner is the image comprehended than the mind  
 Accelerates into the waiting emptiness: and therefore  
 Only in eternity shall we encounter lakes.  
 Falling is all we must hope for, falling  
 From the known into the guessed-at, falling further.

For you the hero, for you who forswore it, life  
 In its entirety was the insistent image;  
 And when you gave that life a name  
 The line would seal itself like destiny. Though even  
 In your gentlest word a death was resident,  
 The god who walked ahead would lead you out and over.

Wandering spirit, none wandered further.  
 The others are proud to keep house in small poems,  
 To linger in narrow comparisons. Professionals. You alone  
 Pull like the moon: see now, below: it grows light, it grows dark,  
 Your landscape, the sacred and startled night-landscape  
 That you comprehend in your leaving. No one  
 Renounced this more nobly and no one  
 Restored it so nearly intact to the whole, or asked for less.  
 So too, in the years you stopped counting, you played  
 With an infinite joy, as though joy were not shut inside us,  
 But lay in the grass of this earth, without ownership, left by  
 celestial children.

Ah, what the best desire you built without desire,  
Brick on brick: and there it stood. And when it fell  
It could not discompose you.  
How can we, after this timeless example,  
Mistrust the earth still, when we could learn  
To sense from all that's passing now  
The planet's inclination to the earth, the world to come?