

Robin Behn

The Experiment

My friend the biologist has let go his bees!

Above his letter, I see them, loosening,
a gold girdle unraveling its gold industrious threads,
fanning the air into a color like joy

as he stands in the field, open-mouthed, facing the
opened
experimental hive's two glass faces — the dry, narrow
aquarium he swam toward, searching, six years
for what seemed to be allegiances, queenly
phenomena he painstakingly discerned, documented,
dished-up:

how those who share more
genes with the queen have the keenest
jobs, and/or fight to a hyperbolic death
over trifles she just might possibly nod at,

though when the nod comes
they'll be too far away to know,
raiding certain flowers,

swaddling their larval charges,
but swaddling
most carefully
certain ones.

Something in him gave, then.
He saw something there

— not in the workers' socialist aspirations;
 — not in the easy-to-feel-sorry-for children
 hatching from the dreamy
 collective unconscious, unconscious, still,
 of whose they really were;

— not even in the queen, supreme
 being who had floated
 in his isolate dreams, the way

to the prisoner clamped in solitary
 the mother-of-us-all appears
 accompanied by virginal singing

and bears and bares her pointy hindmost parts,
 surprisingly, disappointingly, not at all
 delicious —.

None of the above.

What he saw, this time,
 when the reasons for everything
 stood in the glass
 showcases of the genes

and he backed off, ongoing
 at the museum he had made,

was One Big Bee face
 massed against the pyrex,

one buzzing brain busy
 in its own unpublishable thought:

the paler-thoraxed ones clustering
 into two eye-shaped ovals
 (*that* would be the ideal family, he thought,
 that actually saw
 one another's thoughts)

then the sealed hexagonal mouths of the larval caves
 congealed, at this distance,
 into the one sealed mouth,

his,
 (or

it's the front door, he thought,
 the house on 8th St.,

and my mother left, saying . . .
 and the screen door with its insect
 eye-grid slammed and then
 my father closed the inner door,
 hardwood with no window . . . —

all his, even
 the bulbous queen, riding front and center
 like a throbbing, immutable third eye —.

And the journal had accepted it when it
 proved repeatable
 so everyone else who had never thought to dream this
 would now positively be able to dream it

so he knew it was god's face flattened
 in the funhouse mirror he had made: god's face

seen from outside, his own
 from within: a stuffed coin

he flipped and flipped in a mind
 that stood by the lab's door
 divorcing itself from what it had wrought

then flew somehow across the familiar space
 and took it up in its steady mind's arms, out
 to the grassy lot behind the lab

and allowed the famed architecture

of the twenty-seven-boned hand
to raise up the lid,

the way, he says,

we finally rose up
on our hindlegs to part the tall grasses
and see into the distances what

could kill us and then stepped out
— big-brained, two-legged, wobbling —
into the future of Man.