

Ron Pretty

## LEBENSRAUM

I have been murdering bees all morning.  
The queen trapped in the cavity wall  
between the brickwork and the studs  
there was no way of shifting the workers  
or the drones. Apart from pulling down the wall  
there was no way of getting them out  
of their newfound *lebensraum*  
and so I turned to gas.

Looking for a cave, or a knot hole in a gum  
they came in through an airvent to set up home.  
When I put my hand against the inside wall  
I felt the shiver of a thousand wings  
a fertile factory building, crowded as a ghetto.  
A beehive is a busy place; to step outside  
the laundry door was to be surrounded  
by the workers, coming and going  
in their figure eight dance  
their busy-ness as threat:  
I had no choice but gas.

The insect spray pumped into the airvent  
the frenzy rises and the noise: the shivering  
of the land of milk and honey betrayed  
as the gas plops and dribbles and kills  
the bees in their nakedness falling  
into silence; until the wall is still.  
For days after, an odd lost bee  
batters against the window  
unable to go home  
unable to go away.

Now from the wall there's a smell of rotting mead  
the bees entombed  
and disinfectant added  
to their history.