

SEAN
BORODALE



Bee Journal

CAPE POETRY

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Acknowledgements

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About the Book

Bee Journal is a startlingly original poetry sequence: a poem-journal of beekeeping that chronicles the life of the hive, from the collection of a small nucleus on the first day to the capture of a swarm two years later. It observes the living architecture of the comb, the range and locality of the colony; its flights, flowers, water sources, parasites, lives and deaths.

These poems were written at the hive wearing a veil and gloves, and the journal is an intrinsic part of the kinetic activity of keeping bees: making 'tiny, regular checks' in the turn around the central figure of the sun, and minute exploratory interventions through the round of the year. The book is full of moments of revelation - particularly of the relationship between the domestic and the wild. In attempting to record and invoke something of the complexity of the relationship between 'keeper' and 'kept' it tunes ear and speech towards the ecstasy of bees, between the known and the unknown.

Because of its genesis as a working journal, there is here an unusual intimacy and deep scrutiny of life and death in nature. The language itself is dense and clotted, the imagery thrillingly fresh, and the observing eye close, scrupulous and full of wonder. *Bee Journal* is one of the most unusual and exciting poetry debuts in years.

About the Author

Sean Borodale works as a poet and artist, making scriptive and documentary poems written on location; this derives from his process of writing and walking for works such as *Notes for an Atlas* (2003) and *Walking to Paradise* (1999). *Bee Journal* is his first collection of poetry. He lives in Somerset.

for Jane, Orlando and Louis

BEE JOURNAL

Sean Borodale

CAPE POETRY

Economists understand about work about as much as alchemists about gold.

Ivan Illich, 'Shadow Work'

24TH MAY: COLLECTING THE BEES

I'd say it's toiling air, high up here;
steep with bees, and the beacon sun
burns
overlapping light, close to sundown.

Come to collect bees, our hive in parts.
Compound of fencing, stands of nucleus hives.
(Nuc,
new word.)

He just wears a veil, this farmer, no gloves
and lifts open a dribbly wax-clogged
blackwood box.
We in our whites mute with held breath.
Hello bees.
Drops four frames into our silence.

The air is like mica
ancient with thin flecks;
distance viewed through a filter of thousands.
I am observed.

Each box has the pulsar of its source. Porous with eyes
we wait in the spinning sun. The light is Medusa,
sugar of frayed threads; a mesh, a warp-field, all
the skin of our heads.