

DEATH OF THE BEE KEEPER

Humming that swarmed his ears seemed also pain,
But the grass was soft, he old,
And it didn't matter, their thousand-stinging fury,
As he lay under the sun,
His hands and feet cold.

Because of honey, he forgave them, even
This turning on a friend;
Hadn't he stolen their essential sweetness
Like a bear? Their duty was death
As a means to a golden end.

And what is death—a singing helm of bees,
His full head a hive
For poison changed in one ripe thought to mead,
The slow savour of which
Made good his being alive.

And now the humming dimmed to his awareness
Of slowly simplifying
Toward what soon he'd be—earth, flowers,
Pollen that only wanted
Brief wings for flying.

—LEONARD E. NATHAN

from STROUNTES

By GUNNAR EKELÖF

Who is coming, you ask
You want someone to come
Don't you know it is you who will come
you yourself, but to no god
to Nothing
Its doors stand open
Its doors are banging in some wind
What is in there
what do you offer me?

O, something anyway!
There is a little fluff, some specks of dust
a broken cog-wheel on the dirt floor
and a few chunks of slag as in some closed-down works
although there might never have been one somehow

Translated by MURIEL RUKEYSER
and LIEF SJÖBERG