POEMS OF GUNNAR EKELÖF

Translated by Muriel Rukeyser and Leif Sjöberg

Who Feeds the Birds

Who feeds the birds, lazy dog
under the blue sky?
Nevertheless! Lightheartedness feeds them to some degree
and instinct to another.
And the lilies?
Their destiny feeds them.
Who then feeds the lazy dog?
It must surely be a god
Stretch your back and arms, lazy dog
Try lying full-length for dignity
Who feeds you? No one but a God
Chosen are you, verily!

(from *Strountes,* 1955)

When One Comes As Far As I Have

When one comes as far as I have in meaninglessness
every word is again of interest,
finds in the earth
one turns over with an archeologist's spade
The small word 'you'
perhaps a glass bead
that once hung at somebody's throat
The big word 'I'
perhaps a flint shard
with which someone in toothlessness scraped his tough
flesh.

Gunnar Ekelöf has been hailed as Sweden's most important contemporary poet. Muriel Rukeyser is the well-known poet and translator whose latest book is *The Orgy.* Dr. Lief Sjoberg teaches at Columbia University and is the co-translator of Dag Hammarskjold's *Markings.*