

GUNNAR EKELOF'S OPEN-FORM POEM A MÖLNA ELEGY:
PROBLEMS OF GENESIS, STRUCTURE AND INFLUENCE

by

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After being "work in progress" for nearly 23 years, Gunnar Ekelöf's long "Waste Land" poem or quotation-mosaic A Mölna Elegy appeared in 1960. For the purposes of this study I have had access to the original manuscripts, notebooks and letters of Gunnar Ekelöf.

Part I

As is also the case with T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, the critical appraisal of Gunnar Ekelöf's open-form poem A Mölna Elegy has been marked by the dominance of a holistic approach to literature; the work has accordingly been described either as chaotic and structureless and seen as reflecting Ekelöf's evolving, contradictory views of art during the long period of genesis or the attempt has been made to reconcile the chaotic impression which the poem makes with the traditional criterion of "textual unity" by recourse to the notion of musical structure or to the idea of the lyrical "I" as focal point and unifying principle. The first part of this study has been devoted to an examination of those extrinsic elements in Ekelöf's world view and aesthetics which motivated his use of the open structure in A Mölna Elegy: his aesthetics of the indistinct and interest in the active reader role; his aesthetics of the incomplete. Works by Egbert Faas, Umberto Eco and Fritjof Capra have provided the conceptual framework for the notion of the open-form, i.e. of Western art forms which make use of trains of thought common to Eastern mysticism and modern physics and to which the traditional notion of "organic unity" is not germane.

Part II

The second half of this study concerns itself with an exploration of the question of the supposed influence of T. S. Eliot on Gunnar Ekelöf, the subject of considerable debate among Swedish critics; the centre of interest has been the possible influence of Eliot's Four Quartets on Ekelöf's collection Ferry Song (1941) and, more importantly, the possible influence of The Waste Land on A Mölne Elegy. Several aspects of the Eliot-Ekelöf interference hypothesis have been examined: the history of Eliot's supposed influence on Ekelöf in critical circles; Ekelöf's reception of Eliot; Ekelöf's attitude towards the concept of "influence"; his views on the question of his supposed dependency on Eliot; textual similarities in Ekelöf's work which could conceivably be put forward in support of the Eliot-Ekelöf influence hypothesis.

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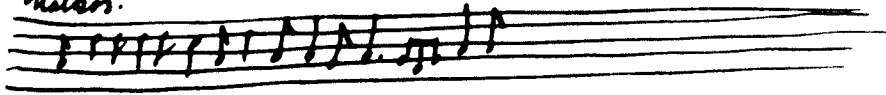
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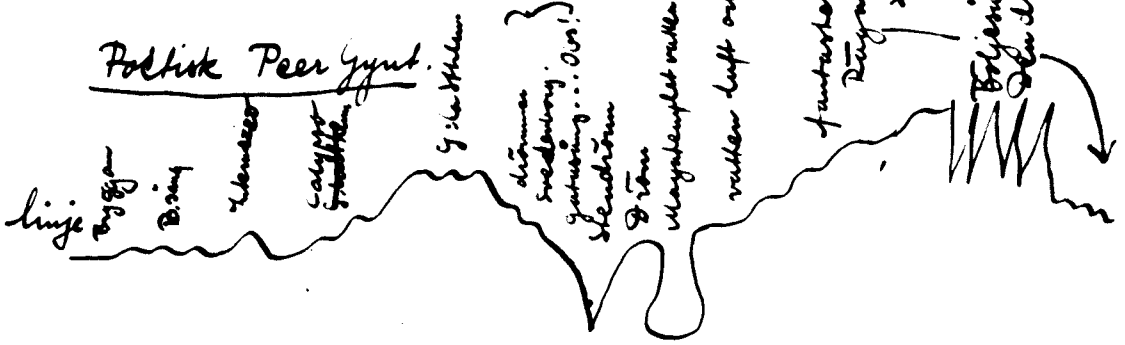
En Mötta - Elegi

Malbos.



En avd. Rågas. fantasterier

Poetisk Peer Gynt.



will alfabele

Kulturfaktas-
magari.

*. Personer: Petronius
 Muhij'd-Din ibn al-trabi
~~att~~ Råga Malbos andra Rågas Rågini
 Julat ed-Din Rumi
 Malbos.

En rivell av dem, mera disparata
mera anonyma.

trabiter Versaillespersoner.

Gestaltbifvaran
Gestaltbifvande

En M.-E.
 Mystereer, Drömliv,
 Menippeisk
 Versailles. "En elegi på gravén
 av min ungdom"
 Poetisk Peer Gynt.

Isstober (med ett vmd
to art.)

Skulden Förvand g: boustraver.

Introduction

In the first part of the following dissertation, I have concentrated principally on the structure of Gunnar Ekelöf's long poem A Mölna Elegy (1960) and have attempted, by drawing on the original manuscripts, notebooks and letters of the poet, to illuminate some of the aspects of Ekelöf's own aesthetics, world view and work methods which motivated his use of the 'open-form,' that is of a poetic form best exemplified by Ezra Pound's Cantos, T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land and William Carlos Williams' Paterson. The purpose of the study has not been to furnish an interpretation of the work per se and I doubt whether such a project would be a conceivable possibility, for as several Swedish critics pointed out in their reviews of A Mölna Elegy upon its appearance in 1960 the Elegy is a poem the full significance of which it will take decades to uncover. To put the matter in other terms: our theories about art, our aesthetic criticism on the one hand and the actual works of art on the other hand develop at different rhythms and the Elegy has to be seen as being in advance of its time, in advance of our aesthetics, at least insofar as the latter is a theoretical pursuit.

There is some justification for my "extrinsic" rather than intrinsic approach to the work in T. S. Eliot's definition of the task of the critic in an essay on Hamlet written in 1919; as Eliot sees it the critic's role is not to interpret the uninterpretable but rather to furnish the necessary background information which makes the reader's task of attempting to understand the work feasible: "Qua work of art, the work of art cannot be interpreted; there is nothing to interpret; we can only criticize it according to standards, in comparison to other works of art; and for 'interpretation' the chief task is the presentation of relevant historical facts which the

reader is not assumed to know." Following this dictum my approach has been more or less the traditional one in Ekelöf dissertations, that is to make use of the enormous wealth of extraneous material in the Gunnar Ekelöf collection, Uppsala University Library, to illuminate the work from the outside.

Academic critics generally, even such a critic as Pär Hellström, who has devoted considerable attention to an elucidation of Ekelöf's aesthetics of the fragmentary and incomplete and its indebtedness to certain trains of Oriental thought (Taoism in particular), have persisted in viewing Ekelöf's long mosaic of quotations A Mölna Elegy in the framework of such traditional and inadequate criteria as 'organic unity' or the notion of unity based on musical form and have, as a result, come to an excessively negative appraisal of the poem's artistic merit, while at the same time ignoring both its specificity, a specificity grounded in an aesthetics of the "charm of the indistinct," and its general affinity with other works written in the open-form.

Both Egbert Faas and Umberto Eco, critics to whom I am indebted, have written pioneering works on the aesthetics of the open-form or open structure, which in the domain of poetry is represented by long poems making systematic use of the quotation-allusion technique, of a more connotative than denotative emphasis and of an impressionism which, somewhat along the lines of those works of literature which lend themselves to the type of critical analysis practiced by phenomenological critics such as Wolfgang Iser, demands the active participation of the reader. The open-form in its aesthetic-metaphysical underpinning makes use of trains of thought typical of and to a certain extent even influenced by certain aspects of Eastern mysticism (Taoism, Buddhism) and modern physics such as those expounded by Fritjof Capra in his book The Tao of Physics: the repudiation of the classical, mechanistic notion of causality in favour of a belief in the infinite interpenetration of things, whereby the establishment of causality becomes a human impossibility; a refusal of such Euclidean notions

as symmetry and of the concept of 'organic unity'; the notion of impermanence or flux whereby all fixed, determinate and completed forms (including the notion of the 'finished' work of art) are seen as maya or illusion and as life-falsifying; the refusal of the concept of 'objective knowledge,' that is of the human capacity to perceive things in their 'whatness' (Joyce) or Da-sein independent of any (human) teleology or projection, since the observer is regarded as inextricably linked with the thing(s) observed, in contradistinction to the Cartesian notion of a separation of the observer and the observed which has been the foundation of the myth of objective knowledge; the notion of stasis in kinesis.

As Egbert Faas has emphasized, there is no such thing as a perfectly realized example of a work of art in the open-form; the notion is not based on any ideal, realized models but is rather an aesthetic, metaphysical awareness of the Western artist which moves in the direction of Oriental thought and art and modern physics. The reader who desires a closer understanding of some of the aspects of the open-form in art and literature as outlined above is referred to the works by Faas, Eco and Capra. Needless to say my aim has not been to force such a personal and original poet and thinker as Gunnar Ekelöf into a rigid theoretical framework, which in any case the notion of 'open-form' is not, but rather to use the latter concept where I found useful affinities between other artists working in the open-form and Gunnar Ekelöf.

Unavoidably I have had to confront the problem of the Elegy's long period of genesis and the question as to whether a significant evolution in Ekelöf's aesthetic thinking over the approximately twenty-three years of the poem's conception may be accountable for the fragmentary, chaotic and ununified impression which the work has made on many critics and readers. While not denying that there is a rhetorical emphasis in the Elegy's opening sections which the author himself may have later come to view with a certain amount of

estrangement and which tends to favour the belief that the work occupies an isolated position in Ekelöf's production far distant from the grotesques of his Stroutnes period, I have been unable to subscribe completely to Pär Hellström's view that A Mölna Elegy's fragmentariness may be attributed to the divergence of two contradictory or opposed Ekelöfian conceptions of art, let us call them the rhetorical-aestheticizing and the antiaesthetic, conceptions of art which he adopted during two distinct periods of his artistic development. My attempt has been rather to reconcile the two, to stress the continuity of Ekelöf's approach to art and thus indirectly to rehabilitate or reinstate his artistic deliberateness and self-awareness. In this context I must caution the reader against the identification of the open-form with complete chaos, randomness or arbitrariness and recommend the study of Umberto Eco's work on the open-form as a corrective to Faas, who tends somewhat to overemphasize the "happening" aspect of works in the open-form, i.e. the role of chance in their production, and fails thus to stress the fact that any work of art, as long as it is such and artistically informative, represents the establishment of a more or less conventional, deliberate order; in this sense there is nothing arbitrary or chaotic about the open-form in art or literature and there is just as much premeditation or intentionality involved in its creation as there is in that of any traditional "closed" structure.

In the process of examining the question of the Elegy's genesis and structure, I have of necessity had to deal with Ekelöf's work as a whole-- or with as much of it as is present to my consciousness--and with the thematic similarities, analogies and overlappings which link A Mölna Elegy with its immediate neighbours in Ekelöf's production (Non serviam, Färjesång) and with his work in general. Here as always the only method open to the critic is that which Brecht has called "kritisches Blättern." I have felt called upon

to reject the notion of 'organic generation,' a notion which Michael Riffaterre has applied most systematically in his criticism, to reject it not out of any fundamental disbelief or scepticism as regards the possible existence of such a factor in the genesis or creation of poetry but rather out of the belief that it can hardly be within the capacity of the critic to reconstruct or follow the often idiosyncratic genetic meanderings of the poet; further, that these can only be grounded in structure of the language, in other words given objectively, is just as inconceivable, a view which Riffaterre seems to imply if not state explicitly.

In the second half of the dissertation I have ventured to examine the extremely elusive question of T. S. Eliot's supposed influence on Gunnar Ekelöf and to that purpose I have drawn on several long unpublished commentaries in Ekelöf's hand dealing with the subject of influence and with his own view of his relationship with Eliot. In a brief introductory section I have sketched some of the difficulties connected with establishing hypotheses of influence in art and literature. For the theoretical framework of this section part I am indebted to the work of Claudio Guillén and Göran Hermerén, perhaps the two best "influence" theoreticians. Two focal points have been the centre of my interest here: first the presumed influence of Eliot's Four Quartets on Ekelöf's collection Färjesång and second the possibility of an influence of Eliot's open-form poem The Waste Land on Ekelöf's open-form quotation-mosaic A Mölne Elegy. Most of the textual analyses and thematic comparisons in this second part have been devoted to the examination of this second case. I have also examined with a view to ascertaining their substantiality the various more or less detailed hypotheses of influence (not necessarily of the influence of Eliot) which Swedish and foreign critics have put forward with respect to Ekelöf. The possibility of an influence of Eliot on Ekelöf has been the subject of considerable controversy in Swedish scholar-

ly circles and the end of the debate is hardly in sight. The very elusiveness of the question and of the whole conception of "influence" makes any definitive conclusions inconceivable but the topic is certainly of some interest to students of Ekelöf and to those interested in Swedish literary history. For a more detailed statement of my approach here the reader is referred to the conclusion of this second part.

With the exception of minor material given in the notes in Swedish only, all Swedish quotes and titles are given in translation. For a precise statement of my translation procedure, the reader may refer to the Appendix and to note 6. For a brief summary of my treatment of the manuscript sources from the Gunnar Ekelöf collection, see note 1.

The opening manuscript copy, which represents one of Gunnar Ekelöf's general plans to A Mölna Elegy, is taken from the material in the Gunnar Ekelöf collection, Uppsala University Library.

Genesis and Structure: The Elegy as an Open-Form

When Gunnar Ekelöf's long poem En Målna-Elegi (A Målna Elegy) appeared in Swedish bookshops and was reviewed by numerous major Swedish literary critics on November 4, 1960, it was recognized to be a significant day in the history of Swedish lyric poetry. The Elegy had been "work in progress" for a period of roughly 23 years. A note contained in folder 'j' among the uncatalogued Målna manuscripts indicates that Ekelöf had conceived the plan for the poem, although not under its final title, as early as 1935: "In my imagination already in 1935 . . . In reality in 1939 . . . A Målna Elegy 1935-45" (I fantasien, redan 1935 . . . I verkligheten 1939 . . . En Målna-Elegi 1935-45).¹ A marginal note in Ekelöf's own annotated copy of the Elegy (now in the possession of fru Ingrid Ekelöf) indicates that the line "my ten-thousandth sunset" (min tiotusende solnedgång), later eliminated from the published version of the work, was the nucleus of the first drafts of what was to become En Målna-Elegi: "1937. The very first draft was 3 lines of which the last one ran 'my ten-thousandth sunset.' That was a licentia poetica for 30 years (at 300-- not 365--sunsets per year, something which moreover would have been possible only in Attica" [1937. Allra första utkastet var 3 rader varav den sista lød 'min tiotusende solnedgång'. Detta var en licentia poetica för 30 år (à 300-- ej 365--solnedgångar pr år, något som f.ö varit möjligt endast i Attika)].²

In his book Diktaren och de skapande ögonblicken (The Poet and Creative Moments), which, as its author claims, is one of the few books devoted specifically to the problem of the genesis of literary works, Carl Fehrman writes about Paul Valéry's aesthetics and makes a comparison between the "arbetsmetod" (work methods) of Valéry and that of Gunnar Ekelöf:

In his day people took offence at Valéry's publication of different versions of the same poem, even of contradictory versions. He always had arguments to defend himself with and directly urged the poets of his time to produce--just as composers who work with tonal material--and to leave behind a wealth of variations on the same theme. Among the Swedish poets who have followed his recommendation is Gunnar Ekelöf.³

Even the most superficial examination of Gunnar Ekelöf's work methods supports the validity of Fehrman's observation. Ekelöf frequently published poems in various Swedish journals, magazines and newspapers, only to revise them later and to incorporate them into his carefully organized individual collections of poetry. A study of the Mölna manuscripts reveals the wealth of various drafts (often with seemingly only minor variations among them) to which Ekelöf submitted the various sections of the work. In the case of En Mölna-Elegi the same process is at work as in the conception of Ekelöf's first poetry collection Sent på jorden (Late on Earth), of which the author could write in his essay "En outsiders väg" (An Outsider's Way): "I never worked surrealistically; I worked with 50 to 100 drafts of each poem." (jag arbetade aldrig surrealistiskt, jag arbetade med 50 och 100 koncept för varje dikt.)⁴

Non serviam, Färjesång and the Elegy:

Simultaneous Genesis and Organic Generation

Given the fact that the Elegy was "work in progress" for such a considerable period of time, it is not surprising that a great deal of overlapping was to occur between the poem and the other poetry collections which Ekelöf worked on during those 23 years from 1937 to 1960. Many of the themes which have their place in a highly impressionistic form within the Elegy have been developed by Ekelöf in greater detail in his other poetry collections from

the period. Färjesång (Ferry Song) and Non serviam are the two poetry collections whose thematic links with En Mølna-Elegi are most obvious, but even Opus incertum and En natt i Otačac (A Night in Otačac) have much in common with the Elegy. As far as Färjesång and Non serviam are concerned, Pär Hellström has pointed to the close ties between those two poetry collections from the 40's and the Elegy: "As far as the two collections which enclose A Mølna Elegy are concerned, it is clear that many of the poems have a direct relationship with the Elegy." (När det gäller de två samlingar som omsluter En Mølna-Elegi är det tydligt att åtskilliga dikter har direkta förbindelser med Elegin.)⁵

The image of "death's ship" in Ekelöf's much discussed poem "Samothrake" (Samothrace) from the 1945 collection Non serviam can easily be associated with the following lines which conclude the 1789 section (pp. 24-25) of En Mølna-Elegi: "But in the clarity of the night was heard again / now slæk, now strong, as in rhythmically varied choruses / locked in, below decks, the singing of the slaves..." (Men i den klara natten hördes åter / än svagt, än starkt, liksom i rytmiskt skilda körer / de inestängda slavars sång...) (25, 258-261).⁶ One may also see an echo of this Nike theme or image in the apparently frivolous lines of the "gammal aktör" (old actor): "-Victoria! / I belong alas also among your captives, / beside the victory chariot-Ha!- surviving captive: . . ." (-Victoria! / Jag tillhör gånås också dina fångna, / vid segercharen-Ha!-i survivancen fångna: . . .)(14, 81-83) Leif Sjöberg in his A Reader's Guide to Gunnar Ekelöf's 'A Mølna Elegy' has viewed these lines, and correctly so, as a reminiscence of Strindberg's Ett drömspel (A Dream Play) and in particular of that scene where the officer waits in vain for his actress-beloved Victoria in front of the theatre, but he has failed to see the association with the Samothrake-Nike theme.⁷ Under the heading "Nike von Samothrake," the Lexikon der alten Welt describes the statue of this Greek goddess

who personified victory [Greek: Nike, Latin: Victoria] in the following terms: "Die Basis (aus rhod. Stein) der Göttin ist als Prora (Vorderteil eines Schiffes) gestaltet, auf der Nike, eben herabgebraust, heftig ausschreitet." The identification of Nike (Victoria) with the idea of a "ship of the dead" as in the poem "Samothrake" is entirely Ekelöf's invention and has no basis in Greek myth. In a commentary to the poem Ekelöf has pointed to one mythological source of his own image of the ship of dead always on the point of foundering: "There is an old Norwegian legend, perhaps also western Swedish, about the half-ship which has no stern or which has the stern under water. It is held up by the exertions of the rowers. In Norwegian this is called the saga of Draugen." (Det finns en gammal norsk legend, kanske också västsvensk, om det halva skeppet som inte har någon akter eller som har aktern under vattnet. Det hålls uppe genom de roendes ansträngningar. På norska heter det sagan om "Draugen".)⁸

While the association of Nike of Samothrace with death is Ekelöf's own personal one, the motif of the ship of the dead *per se* has a long mythological tradition. Gaston Bachelard in his analysis of "le complexe de Caron" in L'Eau et les rêves writes of the image in terms perfectly applicable to Ekelöf's own "Samothrake": "Tout ce que la mort a de lourd, de lent, est aussi marqué par la figure de Caron. Les barques chargées d'âmes sont toujours sur le point de sombrer. Etonnante image où l'on sent que la Mort craint de mourir, où le noyé craint encore le naufrage."⁹ "Samothrake" is just one of the poems which had close ties with the Elegy during the first stages of the latter poem's conception but as Gunnar Tideström has indicated in his study of "Samothrake," there is a great deal of topicality involved in the image of "de dödas skepp" (the ship of the dead).¹⁰ Ekelöf himself as late as 1967 emphasized this topicality: "The poem symbolizes the struggle during World

War II. . . . What does the poem symbolize? you ask. The belief in a victory over the evil forces of Nazism." (Dikten symboliserar kampen under andra världskriget. . . . Vad symboliserar dikten? frågar ni. Tron på seger över de onda nazimakterna.)¹¹

From a more generally human point of view, however, "Samothrake" and the image of the ship of the dead maintains its relevance even for the final 1960 version of the Elegy. Tideström has, I believe, correctly analyzed the significance of the Nike image when he connects it with the poet's vision of human culture in general, a vision which is at once pessimistic and optimistic. Ekelöf has himself indicated that "Samothrake" contains "a vision of time, of man's evolution" (en vision av tiden, av människans utveckling).¹² The meaning of the poem is obviously condensed in the figure of Nike, the personification of victory. She symbolizes the ambivalence of Ekelöf's view of life: there is no ultimate goal in life, for the "goal" is continually receding and ultimately unattainable, and yet despite the pessimism inherent in this view, the struggle itself is a kind of telos. Tideström concludes perceptively:

Nike, the goddess of victory, is herself a cloud image. Has anyone ever possessed her, won the victory, reached the goal? Hardly. At the most he has helped someone else on the way towards her. The goal recedes continually like the figure-head on the ship. But if this is true, then of course the goal, the harbour is on board, then the victory is connected with the struggle itself. . . .¹³

Ekelöf's own commentary to the poem validates Tideström's interpretation: "The figure of Nike is Victory, the perhaps temporary victory, consequently not the goal, since no victory is definitive. Victory involves a continual striving." (Gestalten av Nike är Segern, den kanske tillfälliga segern, alltså inte målet, därför att ingen seger är definitiv. Segern innebär ett ständigt bemödande.)¹⁴

Ekelöf's attitude towards the problem of a human teleology as expressed in

"Samothrake" comes close to the words of the angels in the second part of Goethe's Faust: "Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, / Den können wir erlösen."¹⁵

Another example of this overlapping of motifs, themes and allusions between the Elegy and other poetry collections of Ekelöf from the 40's is the poet's use of the famous song of Ariel from Shakespeare's The Tempest (Act I, Scene 2). One of the drafts to En Målna-Elegi and in particular to its La Brinvilliers section (p. 49) contains the line "Full fathom five" from Ariel's song:

"Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made,
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell."

The above-mentioned line did not, however, find its way into the final version of this scene from the Elegy but rather into the poem "Bal des petits lits blancs," one of the "Havstema" (Sea themes) in Non serviam: "A little boy stands / in front of the dark aquarium / Full fathom five thy father lies-" (En liten pojke står / inför akvariets dunkel / Fem famnar djupt din fader-). What Kjell Espmark says in his book Själén i bild (The Soul as Image) about the genesis of Erik Lindegren's Mannen utan väg (The Man without a Way) could apply equally well to lines in Ekelöf's poetry such as the above Shakespeare quote: "In other words isolated passages did not develop organically within the configuration in which they finally are to be found. Neither does an image have to have been crystallized in the syntactic context in which it finally functions." (Enstaka passager har med andra ord inte nödvändigtvis vuxit fram organiskt inom den gestalt där de slutligen återfinns. Inte heller

behöver en bild ha utkristalliserats i det syntaktiska sammanhang där den till sist fungerar.)¹⁶ In his notes to the 1962 re-edition of the Sent på jorden material, Ekelöf points to the same process whereby the poet seemingly randomly shuffles around lines and fragments which have been generated in one particular "organic" context to such an extent that they end up in an entirely foreign context:

Some of these fragments have also been used later in different poetry collections, but because this has taken place in forms which are in part quite modified and in different contexts which are not organic compared to the [original] poems, for me there is a certain curiosity value involved in replacing them in their original state and in putting them back into what remains of their original surroundings.¹⁷

If this apparently random shuffling process is more easily comprehensible and "nachvollziehbar" when one is dealing with direct quotes or allusions as above, when the passage or line in question is an original one and yet has been allowed to function in two separate contexts at variance with each other, the process, at once psychological and creative, which finally led to its inclusion in one context to the exclusion of another "organic" one is more difficult to follow, let alone explain. The critic Michael Riffaterre has in both of his works Semiotics of Poetry and La production du texte developed and applied the concept of the "semantic matrix" from which an entire poem may be generated through a process of elaboration, association and expansion. In his use of Riffaterre's concept to analyze Ekelöf's poem "Översvämning i storslaget landskap" (flood in a grandiose landscape) from Sent på jorden, the Swedish critic Erik Mesterton arrives at the following definition of the matrix:

There exists in every poem, according to Riffaterre, a nucleus which he calls a matrix. The matrix consists of a minimal phrase, sometimes an entire sentence, sometimes a single word, which in that case is not present in the poem. Most often the matrix can be found in the first lines or sometimes in the title. This then generates a series of variations until the thematic possibilities are exhausted. The matrix contains therefore the information which is repeated throughout the poem and which gives it unity and therefore significance. He calls this variation process "expansion."¹⁸

A good example of lines from Ekelöf which have come to function in two more or less differing contexts and would thus seem to belie the idea of a semantic matrix out of which the "organic unity" of the poem is generated-- or at least to point to the insurmountable difficulties which the critic faces when trying to reconstruct the process of generation and expansion--can be found in one of the drafts to the previously mentioned La Brinvilliers section of the Elegy. Here we encounter the two lines "(you are weighed in the balance and found / partly light, partly heavy)" [(du är vägd på en väg och befunnen / dels lätt, dels tung)]:

Full fathom five
 [I want to] drown
 without a plank, [without] a cannon-
 ball, [without]* a flag
 or rather be cremated
 [cremated so that] with rising
 smoke and be extinguished
 So that the lightest part of me
 rises into the stratospheres
 lands as spores on
 a far-away star:
 new life
 so that the medium-heavy lies

in everyman's garden
 as manure
 so that the heavy part when the ashes
 are scattered floats in
 the oceans
 is swallowed and disgorged as unsuitable by
 the oceans' fish and goldfish.
 [Chinese unsuitability]
 so that the heaviest part sinks to the bottom.
 so that the heaviest heaviest part
 is united with the centre.
 (you are weighed in the balance and found
 partly light, partly heavy).¹⁹

* and

The last two lines quoted above were ultimately included in section 4 of Ekelöf's "Tag och skriv" ("Write it Down") (Färjesång, 1941):

I abandon myself
 like the last rat a sinking ship
 a burning wreck from which the depths will get theirs when the
 heights have got theirs,
 (you are weighed in the balance and found partly light, partly heavy),
 driving shipwrecked upon the darkness changing shapes,
 drawn and illumined by the star of enigmatic struggle,
 she who ~~unseen~~ is mightier than the sun or moon,
 she who is both single and double, dark and light,
 all at once! Not in order.

To give a last example which would refute the idea of an organic generation of the poem, one could mention the fact that the folder which bears the heading 'aktuellt' (topical) among the Mölna manuscripts contains a draft to the "Avsked" (Leavetaking) section of the Elegy (one of the first sections of the poem to be published, namely in the journal Ars in 1942) which is much

the same as the version printed in 1942 and the "definitive" version of 1960. This particular draft has the rather frivolous lines "Splendid. Really excellent. / Or bad, very bad" (Å förträffligt, alldeles utmärkt. / Eller illa, ganska dåligt), which in slightly altered form were finally placed in an entirely different section of the work, namely the "Tant Grå, Tante Grün, Tante Louche" section which follows the "Hesperos" loculus plate (pp. 21-23). Despite the triviality of the lines, this example would appear to be another proof of the applicability of Espmark's remark to Ekelöf's work as well as making one rather sceptical with regard to the notion of "organic generation."

Several factors complicate all efforts to establish the lines or contours of Ekelöf's evolving conception of the poem which was to become En Mölna-Elegi. In the first place one must deal with the disordered state of the Mölna manuscripts. Until Ekelöf's innumerable manuscripts, drafts and notebooks have been catalogued by a competent authority, this difficulty will constantly have to be confronted. In addition, given the more or less erratic fashion in which Ekelöf used his notebooks, first beginning at one end, then turning the notebook over and beginning at the other end, it is often next to impossible to date the various notebook entries with any degree of reliability, unless of course there is the author's own dating to go by. Ekelöf describes the way in which he manipulated his notebooks in a note dated 1962 in his "anteckningsbok F" (notebook F):

In such notebooks as these everything doesn't have to be from the year they are dated; on the contrary a lot of it is frequently from later, because I've taken what paper I had at hand. I've noticed that I almost always was used to beginning them at one end--and that was often with the intention of writing a running "diary" of some kind--only to begin later from the other end (with the book turned upside down) with a similar (though less firm) intention. That which is in the middle is probably later than both of these beginnings.²⁰

In Diktaren och de skapande ögonblicken Carl Fehrman has given the following description of Paul Valéry's poetic practice:

Two things are worth commenting on before we leave this initial phase of poetry, the sestina. One is the fact that Valéry clearly began the poem while at the same time he was busy composing other poems; almost all the poems in Charmes were written, Valéry said, "simultanément." This state of affairs is not unusual; many parallels in the notebooks of other poets could be cited. During a productive period the flow of ideas and impulses certainly begins to flow again from many directions.²¹

Fehrman's description of the process of simultaneous genesis is certainly applicable to Ekelöf's creative practice and to connections which the Elegy has with Färjesång and Non serviam. Folder 'c' among the Mölna manuscripts contains a rather detailed plan or "disposition" for Färjesång, the poetry collection which Ekelöf considered to be his breakthrough following the regression which the romantic, Rimbaldian poetry collections of the 30's (Dedikation, Sorgen och stjärnan and Köp den blindes sång) (Dedication, Grief and Stars and Buy the Blind Man's Song) constituted with respect to the remarkable début of Sent på jorden. One of the poems cited in group III of this layout for Färjesång is a "Mölnaelegi (han på terrassen)" [Mölna Elegy (the one on the terrace)]. Other poems mentioned there outside of the ones that were actually incorporated in the 1941 collection are "De drunknade" (The Drowned), "Stormen" (The Tempest) (a title obviously borrowed from Shakespeare), "Bal des lits blancs" (later forming part of Non serviam) and a poem cited as both "Ej mskr" (Not people) and "Men ej till mskr" (But not for people). The title of the last poem is of course taken from Heidenstam's Ensamhetens tankar (Thoughts of Loneliness), part IV:

I have longed for home for eight long years.

In my very sleep I have felt longing.

I long for home. I long wherever I go

-but not for people! I long the soil,

I long the stones where I played as a child.²²

That this motif of the voyage as escape has also played its role in the shaping of the Elegy is evidenced by several commentaries of Ekelöf, one of which is in the folder marked 'Överst':

Reflections on the fact that this inland sea, this lake are dead, that the waves are dead, the sea or lake meagre, that the route that begins here leads nowhere despite the ships that come in from all countries (terra nova East Indian Company). This touch essential to the journey upwards-outwards, the spiritual one at the end. Work out and expand the observation in connection with my present jetty and Mölna's. The waves are also my dead.

Another note (notebook AC) also mentions the motif of the longed-for but illusory journey: "Apropos the shore with the journey in Mölna which was begun in thought but never realized. In addition to the shore at Mölna, I thought of the bay at Sigtuna, of the gulf at Eleousis and perhaps of this place [the marble quarry at Bräviken]." (Apropå stranden med den i tankarna började, aldrig realiserade resan i Mölna. Tänkte jag utom på Mölnastranden på Sigtunafjärden, viken vid Eleousis och möjligen detta ställe [marmorbruket i Bräviken]).²³ The most obvious and explicit shaping of this motif in the Elegy is in the "Gorgo" section (pp. 50-52):

All that never came to be

All that led to nullity-

Waves that glittered

Waves of which I used to think:

You are the way to the world
 As far as desire you bear us

 But it never begins-

The above-mentioned plan for Färjesång (capsule 'Mölna') certainly seems to indicate that Ekelöf at one point may have even contemplated the Elegy as a possible part of that collection. As far as the genesis of the Elegy and its close ties with Färjesång are concerned, Reidar Ekner's following comment appears to be almost a bit too cautious: "In the summer of the dark year 1941, he [Ekelöf] was staying in Orust and working on a number of "preludes" intended along with A Mölna Elegy to form part of a new poetry collection which had begun to grow out of Ferry Song already before the latter was finished." (Sommaren det mörka året 1941 vistades han [Ekelöf] på Orust och arbetade där på ett antal "preludier", avsedda att jämte En Mölna-Elegi ingå i en ny diktsamling som börjat växa fram ur Färjesång redan innan denna var färdig.)²⁴

While En Mölna-Elegi thus at one point may have been considered as a possible section of Färjesång, it is difficult to draw any far-reaching conclusions concerning the thematic and genetic links between the long poem and the poetry collection from 1941. Ekelöf's elaboration of the homo maximus theme--to take just one example--in both "En värld är varje människa" ("Everyone is a world") in Färjesång and in the "Mega Alexander" section of the Elegy (p. 31, p. 33) does not warrant anything beyond conclusions as to the enormous continuity and consistency with which the poet employed key images and themes throughout his production, a fact which of course most Ekelöf critics have insisted upon. The idea of "den stora människan" (the homo maximus), that is of the Self as a universe of its own corresponding on a microcosmic level to the entire universe as the macrocosm is but one example of a theme which

occupied Ekelöf already in the early years of his artistic development.

In the poem "Fossil inskrift" (Fossil Inscription) from the 1934 collection Dedikation, Ekelöf already conceives of the psychological Self as a kind of universe in miniature, somewhat in the same fashion as Freud viewed the Self as composed of the id, the ego and the super-ego. As early as 1935--not even to mention the above-mentioned poem--Ekelöf points in a rather mock-serious fashion to his own tendency to envisage the human organism as a universe in miniature with its constituent elements at perpetual war with each other:

In some way the image of the white corpuscles' defensive war against intruders has clung to me. This in combination with other images, hints, suggestions and parallelisms from elsewhere has so thoroughly impressed on me both in thought and feeling the notion of the human organism as a body politic that I can rarely conceive of myself in a different way.²⁵

A very early draft to the section "Avsked" of En Målna-Elegi (folder 'aktuellt'), as already mentioned one of the earliest sections of the poem to come into print (in Ars 1942), has the title "Mannen på havet." In what could well be one of the early specific references to the Elegy, Ekelöf writes in a letter of 13 June 1942 to his publishers Bonniers:

As you perhaps remember I wrote to you about the possibility of presenting you a poem for one of the first autumn issues in connection with my new poetry collection. I've been working on it in order to get it finished by midsummer if possible, but have now come to the point where it is impossible and perhaps dangerous to force it. I believe it will be a good and essential poem, preliminary title: "The Man from the Sea," circa 5-6 quartos in length (if not more).²⁶

In Ekelöf's notebook N, which has the significant heading "Vrakgods" (Jetsam),

there are important indications as to how close the connections are between Mölna and the poem "Emigranten" (The Emigrant) in Non serviam: "Här kommer från havet (as a ship-wrecked man . . . only survivor), lost his memory, begun to recover it, reconstructed his life whereby it turned out that one year can't be reconstructed . . ." [Här kommit från havet. (som skeppsbruten . . . enda överlevande) förlorat minnet, börjat återfå det, rekonstruerat sitt liv varvid det befunnits att ett år icke går att rekonstruera . . .] This "dream" ("drömmen") as it is labelled in the notebook entry is roughly the plot of the prose poem "Emigranten." The same notebook also contains, along with an illustration of a Mayan temple, the following "stage direction": "Beach, dunes w. dune grass, the sea at his back. Mystical cellar sticks up out of the sand, resembles Maya building." (Strand, klitter m. strandgräs, havet bakom ryggen. Mystisk källare sticker upp ur sanden, liknar mayabyggnad.) In the same notebook there is also the notation "En Mölna-Elegi + 7 Preludier" (A Mölna Elegy + 7 Preludes) as well as the note "The Mayan temple: a dream in the Mölna district?" (Mayatemplet: en dröm i trakten av Mölna?) The motif of the Mayan temple plays an important role in "Emigranten," where the shipwrecked protagonist and amnesia victim perceives that

There on the beach,
further away, a curious building stood
buried in the dunes, ancient in aspect,
built Cyclopean fashion out of coarse stone blocks, hewn
in some geometrical, pre-Columbian style,
perhaps a Maya building...

A plan for "Mölna och 7 Preludier" (folder 'överst') includes as one of the seven preludes a poem "Mayatemplet: en dröm i trakten av Mölna?" An apparently old entry in pen in folder 'c' of the Mölna papers bears the title "Disp.," i.e. "Disposition" (Plan) and has as one of its subdivisions of a planned Inferno

section of the Elegy "II Mayatemplet" (The Mayan temple) alongside another section labelled "III Stentiden" (Stone-time). An important series of notations dealing with the aspect of time in the Elegy under the heading "Timeless time. Time's timelessness" (Den tidlösa tiden. Tidens tidlöshet) (folder 'Överst') points to the relevance of the Mayan temple image for the theme of time in the Elegy: "Thus in the Inferno: the Mayan temple: where the lost year is consciousness of imprisonment in time, in a time which lacks precisely the redeeming dimension." (Så i Inferno: Mayatemplet: där det förlorade året är medvetandet om fångenskap i tiden, i en tid som saknar just den försonande dimensionen.") The idea that "A fleeting moment robbed me of my future" (Ett flyktigt ögonblick stal mig min framtid) (En Mölna-Elegi, 10, 21) is common to both "Emigranten" and the Elegy. The "I" of the prose poem looks back in frustration at his past after the more or less complete recovery of his memory and tries to reconstruct it day by day, year by year, but all attempts to build a future and to establish the causality of his existence are thwarted by his inability to account for one year: "How can I build myself a future without / verifying fully my past? / One year is lost, that is the simple fact, . . ." (Hur bygga mig en framtid utan att / tillfullo kontrollera mitt förflutna? / Ett år är borta, det är själva faktum, . . .) In the "Marche funebre" section of the Elegy, this idea of the missing moment appears as a Leitmotiv, having been introduced early in the poem, and takes on a collective, almost political dimension:

A flighty moment-
 and now the devil is in the belfry,
 he who robbed us of our future,
 robbed us of our past

"Individualsymbole": The Thrush, the Cuttle-Fish and the Archaeopteryx

In his extremely interesting book Objet trouvé und Surrealismus, Christian Kellerer develops the concept of the "Individualsymbol." An "Individualsymbol" as Kellerer defines it is a personal or private symbol which activates all the psychic, experiential layers of the artist for whom it is significant in a kind of vertical cross-section of his personality; it thus represents an "extreme investment of the libido" ("Libidoinvestierung") on the part of the artist, in contrast to some of the symbols of the surrealists, which, according to Kellerer, merely activate the uppermost and most superficial psychic layers of the personality and thus can be seen more as artificial constructs than as real emotional investments: "Dieses gebietsweise Kommunizieren aller Erlebnisschichten mittels eines Individualsymbols lässt von einem punktuellen Schichtenkurzschluss sprechen. Jede derartige Kurzschlussituation zwischen den Schichten bedeutet eine starke Libidobindung."²⁷ Characteristic of the "Individualsymbol" as Kellerer defines it is that the activation of one of the psychic layers associated with the symbol is enough to activate all the other layers specifically associated with it in the vertical cross-section: "beim Antönen der dem Erlebnis des Individualsymbols entsprechenden Note in irgendeiner Erlebnisschicht wird nicht nur das Individualsymbol selbst erinnert, sondern gleichzeitig auch alles, was damit in den übrigen Erlebnisschichten als dazugehörig assoziiert ist."²⁸ Further, the "Individualsymbol" can be distinguished from the "Kollektivsymbole" or collective symbols of, for example, a Dante, Hieronymus Bosch or Pieter Brueghel the Younger, which are "nicht als individuelle Spontanausdrücke entstanden, sondern als thematisch bedachter Symbolismus, meist unter einem religiös-moralischen Programmgesichtspunkt."²⁹ Kellerer's penetrating elucidation of the operation of the "Individualsymbol" goes far

in illuminating the functioning of such Ekelöfian symbols as the Archaeopteryx, the bird petrified in flight. The thereto related images and motifs such as the "stone-child," the Mayan temple of the early drafts to Mölna and to "Emigranten," as well as the defixiones and images of the riveted all compose a complex and inextricable network, a sort of thematic-symbolic nexus which one can pursue all the way through Ekelöf's work. The thrush or "trast" of En Mölna-Elegi is a further Ekelöfian "Individualsymbol." Ekelöf has referred to it as his "heraldic bird" (heraldisk fågel). The least one can say about it is that it can hardly be distinguished from the Archaeopteryx in Ekelöf's psychic economy. Like the Archaeopteryx, an illustration of which closes the poem, the thrush towards the end of the poem has become petrified in flight; the last stage direction applied to the bird reads: "silent, immobile, / with its beak up" (tigger, orörlig, med näbben / uppåtriktad) (58, 704-705. My stress).

Most of Ekelöf's symbols seem to be "Individualsymbole" in Kellerer's sense. The number of such symbols in Ekelöf's work is great and, as Gunnar Brandell has stressed in respect to one of the poet's favourite symbols, the "sepia" or cuttle-fish, Ekelöf's use of them is surprisingly consistent:

But more important in the literary context is a traditionalism of another kind, an adherence to certain problems, certain images and experiences of a personal nature, which recur again and again in his poetry. An example: as a thirteen-year-old Gunnar Ekelöf observed, if one is to believe his own statements, a cuttle-fish which a fisherman had drawn up on the beach at the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. This cuttle-fish with its eight arms and its wonderful single eye slithers its way through his entire production, right through all revolutions in style and artistic experimentations. A catalogue of such Ekelöfian themes, of his world of images and verbal formulae, would fill an entire volume and would show that most of Ekelöf's poetic advances are at the same time reversions.³⁰

In the "Gorgo" section of the Elegy (pp. 50-51), Ekelöf has associated the cuttle-fish with the Greek Gorgon in accordance with his belief in a folklore association of the two: "Mega Alexandros is a folklore version of Byzantine (+ modern) times. There is a corresponding folklore association in Gorgo and the cuttle-fish later on. She was said to be Alexander's sister."³¹ As innumerable Ekelöf critics have pointed out, the coincidentia oppositorum characteristic of such world views as those of the mystics and of Taoism is also characteristic of Ekelöf. In keeping with this ability to see so-called opposites as but two aspects of a deeper, hidden unity, Ekelöf can write, for example, in an important essay "Verklighetsflykt" (Wirklichkeitsflucht) of the equivalence between the "evil" Pontius Pilate and the "good" Jesus Christ:

They were two seemingly opposed temperaments: the one objective and contemplative, the other subjective and ecstatic. The one wanted nothing and the other everything. So little was necessary for posterity to accuse one of the two, and especially the Roman, of escapism [Wirklichkeitsflucht]. For what are all and nothing but two aspects of the same thing.³²

Similarly, in the "Gorgo" section of the Elegy, which in one of the drafts bears the title "In front of a madonna" (Inför en madonna), the question of the conflict between good and evil is also posed:

It is rather that the cuttle-fish, an innocent animal which has become a symbol of evil for man, swims at the surface of the water with its wonderfully constructed and efficient eye and sees a white chapel on the headland with a little Theotókos (madonna), which for man has become a good symbol, while in reality the entire struggle between above and below continues unabated. . . . The conceptions of good and evil have ancient, magical and certainly unexplored modulations.³³

There is an interesting quote from Servius among the handwritten manuscripts to a planned Petronius essay of Ekelöf (capsule 'Översättningar') (capsule 'Translations') which helps to illuminate the first two lines of the "Gorgo" section ("Cursed be thou / cursed, that is holy") (Förbannad vare du / förbannad är uttytt helig) (50, 558-559). If one views the previously quoted Ekelöf commentary on the symbol of the cuttle-fish in the light of Servius' commentary to Vergil's lines "Auri sacra fames," which is also the first of Petronius' *Fragmenta*, it becomes evident that Ekelöf viewed the ten-armed cuttle-fish as a kind of collective scapegoat, just as the people of Marseilles, according to Servius, had their own official scapegoats, who were at once in a most paradoxical fashion cursed and sacred:

'Auri sacra fames.' 'Sacra' means cursed. The expression comes from a Gallic custom, for when the inhabitants of Massilia [the old Marseilles] were afflicted with the plague one of the poor people volunteered to let himself be fattened at the state's expense and with the finest foods. He was then adorned with holy herbs and sacred garments, led around the entire state amid curses in order that all the hardships of the state would fall back on him and finally banished. This is in Petronius. Old commentator.³⁴

In his book Aussenseiter Hans Mayer has pointed out that modern French with its "sacré" has maintained the ambivalence of the original Latin "sacer": "Das Sakrale hatte stets gleichzeitig mit Heiligung und Verruchtheit, Heil und Verdammnis, weisser und schwarzer Magie den vertrautesten Umgang. Der französische Sprachgebrauch des „sacré“ hat die Ambivalenz bis heute aufbewahrt."³⁵

One of the manuscript notations among the Mölna papers is significant in that it associates the motif of the Archaeopteryx, the oldest known bird form with reptilian characteristics which was discovered in a fossil inscription

near Eichstätt in Bavaria and a life form from which Ekelöf extracted a ready-made image for his own preoccupation with the idea of "death-in-life," with the motif of the Mayan temple, which Ekelöf presumably also identified with this symbolic-thematic complex of petrified life, death-in-life and suspended movement:

-The Dream-

Archaeopteryx

The Mayan temple vign [vignette]

The Mayan temple another view

Several critics have dealt with this "Symbolkomplex" or thematic-symbolic nexus in Ekelöf's work. Lars Forsell has written: "This bird has later flown and sung in so many of his poems, a symbol of the eternal paradox, life in death, flight in repose, the pounding heart in the cold stone." (Denna fågel har sedan flugit och sjungit i så många av hans dikter, en symbol för den eviga paradoxen, livet i döden, flykten i vilan, det bultande hjärtat i den kalla stenen.)³⁶ Ross Shideler has studied the relevance of this symbolic-thematic complex for "Röster under jorden" ("Voices under the Ground"), perhaps the most masterful development of this paradoxical thematic nexus in Ekelöf's entire work. It is above all Ekelöf's understanding of the complex, paradoxical nature of time that is revealed through this nexus and all the images of "sluggish stone" (trögflytande sten) or of petrified flight which are associated with it. Shideler has described the treatment of time in "Röster under jorden" in the following terms: "Time's movement begins the poem; then the poet projects himself and his experiences of time into the floor and thus into the ground, allowing time to become stone, to become, figuratively speaking, 'petrified.'"³⁷

The Ambivalence of Time

Ekelöf's fascination with time is of an early date, as is evidenced by an entry in his early Cahier I:

If one means by the absolute that which cannot be comprehended by reason, then the world contains indeed an absolute element. Movement, time, whatever it is called, is completely inexplicable. Does it exist although it is inexplicable? That is difficult to say or rather it is impossible to prove the existence of this irrational factor. We are confronted with an insoluble mystery, that of not being able to prove intellectually that we exist. In any case we now and then have a vague awareness of the fact that we exist. I think; therefore I am? I feel therefore I am? But it is impossible to say I feel therefore I think; or the reverse.³⁸

Time is paradoxical because it has both a dynamic and a static character; it is a motionless movement, a contradictio in adjecto just as the expression "sluggish stone." It is a movement but a movement which can be divided into an infinite number of static points:

"The present" is equivalent to--"space." "Time and Space," that is history (memory) + the future (hope, vitality) and the present, the eternally stationary moment, static like the concept of space and at the same time dynamic because the past and the future meet there. One can only conceive of space from the point of view of the present. And since movement has to do both with space and time, it can be divided by the intellect into a series of now-positions. Investigate this.³⁹

If time's irrational, paradoxical nature can best be expressed by an oxymoron and is beyond the grasp of logical, discursive thought, we can easily see why Ekelöf throughout En Mölna-Elegi stresses the doubleness of

time, its static-dynamic character. Most critics who have written about the Elegy have observed this ambivalence.⁴⁰ Time is "arrested, flailed" (håmmad, hetsad); it is said both to bolt like a horse "years in minutes / with a tail of yellow leaves" (åratal i minutes / med svans av gulnade blad) (13, 70-72) and to be stuck and "frozen in the wet black branches of the elms" (stelnad i almarnas / fuktsvarta grenar) (14, 74-75). The red sun in the sickness episode (pp. 25-26) is said to roll "in one moment / intolerably fast and in the next intolerably slow" (i ena ögonblicket / olidligt hastigt och i nästa outhärdligt långsamt) (26, 276-277). The seconds are said to be at once "dropped moments" (bortfallna ögonblick) and "riveted" (fastnaglade) moments (27, 315-316).

One of the drafts to "Arguments" (Argument) concerning the Elegy (published as a section of "Notes to A Mölna Elegy" ["Anteckningar till En Mölna-Elegi"] in Lägga patience [Play Solitaire]) mentions the red "fever-ball" (feberklotet) of the setting sun in connection with the same experience of time's ambivalence: "The fever-ball and the strange sensation that time (personally) was racing like the works of a clock whose balance-wheel had broken and personally crept forward as if trying to smother one's personal life." [Feberklotet och de egendomliga förnimmelserna av att tiden (personligt) rusade som ett urverk där oron gått sönder och personligt släpade sig fram som om den ville kväva det personliga.]⁴¹ In the case of the "I's" alter ego or "du" (you) in the sickness episode, the mechanical-scientific measurement of time is negatively contrasted to interior time or the "durée intérieure" (Bergson) and experienced as oppressive and life-destroying. A draft to the poem "Ensam i natten" ("Alone at night") in the collection Stroutnes⁴² illuminates this episode of the Elegy by identifying clocks with death-in-life; the only essential time is the internal:

Alone with the wall-clock, this machine forms

non-time

What does a metronome know about music?

and about what it is made to measure?

Its face is blank and expressionless

a discrete idol

it makes me aware of the incongruity of

relativities

life can't be measured with death

music can't be measured with beats

. . .

But who can unravel life's instinct

for death

Life breeds death around itself, life

encapsulates itself in death

. . . 43

This draft continues with the significant question: "How can one free life? How can one attain the ecstasy of life?" (Hur frigöra liv? Hur nå extasen av liv?) A marginal note to the same draft runs: "Answer: flow with time / with the tide or the streams / never argue with Time." (Svar: flyta med tiden / med tidvattnet eller strömmarna / aldrig disputera med Tiden.) To the above characterization of the "väggur" (wall-clock) as "blankt och uttryckslost" (blank and expressionless) corresponds the stage direction appended to the "frontespisur" (front gable-clock) in En Mölna-Elegi (19, 159): "(Black clock-face with traces of gilt figures, the hands missing)" [(svart urtavla med spår av guldsiffror, visorna borta)].

In Ekelöf's 'Tidiga manuskript' ('Early manuscripts') capsule there is an interesting commentary to a diary entry of Kafka (the latter dated 16 January 1922). Ekelöf first quotes Kafka's words:

Die Uhren stimmen nicht überein, die innere jagt in einer teuflischen oder dämonischen oder jedenfalls unmenschlichen Art, die

Äussere geht stockend ihren gewöhnlichen Gang. Was kann anderes geschehen, als dass sich die zwei verschiedenen Welten trennen und sie trennen sich oder reißen zumindest an einander in einer fürchterlichen Art. Die Wildheit des inneren Ganges mag verschiedene Gründe haben, der sichtbarste ist die Selbstbeobachtung, die keine Vorstellung zur Ruhe kommen lässt, jede emporjagt, um dann selbst wieder als Vorstellung von neuer Selbstbeobachtung weiter gejagt zu werden.

Ekelöf's commentary to Kafka's diary entry presents us with the image of the red sun which he associated with that almost painfully oppressive experience of the incommensurability of a purely mechanically measured, uniform or scientific time and the altogether different rhythm of internal, psychological time:

The most unambiguous expression I've found coming from someone else of a similar, almost identical experience, the recurrent experience of time ever since childhood partly as an inner feverball, rolling, rotating, glowing and crushing at an astronomical speed, partly as an outward procession moving with equally boundless slowness, my breakdowns in the presence of conflicting thoughts, for the first time in poetic form beginning with and including Late on Earth, then all of Ferry Song, half of Non Serviam, all of the Mölna Elegy, also the earliest poems in Ord och Bild.⁴⁴

The image of the setting sun which Ekelöf experienced so acutely in his childhood in his parents' home situated on the hill dominated by St. John's Church (Johanneskyrka), an experience which he describes in "The Sunset" (Solnedgangen) and in the poem "A Door near St. John's" (En port vid Johannes) in the essay collection Promenader och utflykter (Walks and Excursions), also has its place in the Elegy, where it is associated with the same ambivalence of time as indicated in the Kafka commentary:

And the red ball,
 the high fever-ball, dazzling and inflamed,
 came rolling over you, in one moment
 of intolerable speed and in the next unendurably slow. (26, 275-279)

Both Leif Sjöberg and Sverker Ek have pointed out the various images and motifs in the Elegy which contribute to the making off the nexus of images of petrified or riveted movement or time: the numerous defixiones in the Latin section of the poem (pp. 40, 42, 44) with their insistent line "Tene me ne fugia" (Hold me or I shall flee) or the so-called crux decussata or "Andreas-kreuz" which Ekelöf drew himself (p. 46). One can also mention the motif of the stone-child (stenbarn) in the abortion scene or "Mill Song" (Kvarnsång) (pp. 37, 39, 41), which can clearly be associated with the above-mentioned contradictory aspects of time:

I remember

Time,
 I carry it in me
 I bear it in me like a rock, a child of stone,
 complete and unborn- (28, 316-320)

In the third section of his "Anteckningar till En Mölna Elegi," Ekelöf has himself stressed the paradoxical character of the treatment of time in the poem, that is that we are to experience the poem both as an attempt to reconstruct a moment and as a movement:

The entire thing takes place during an indivisible unit of time, that may be either a second or five minutes, but in any case a short moment. That which occurs on the last page occurs at the end, and that which is in the middle is present both at the end and at the beginning[.] It [the poem] is thus intended to be a vertical cross-section of all the different layers of simultaneously flowing time elements; the poem flows, is in movement simultaneously.[.] 45

In this commentary Ekelöf indicates clearly that he conceived the Elegy as an attempt to reconstruct the simultaneous co-existence of time elements, of past, present and future. The implications of this attempt, which have numerous parallels both in Eastern mysticism and in modern physics, are, I think, the following: time is no longer conceived of, as is usually the case, as a one-way flow from the past through the present into the future but rather as a four-dimensional pattern without any definite direction attached to it so that all events are interconnected; concomitant with this refusal of the traditional three-dimensional Euclidean notion of time as a linear succession of isolated, discrete moments is the abandonment of the idea of causation which goes with it, for the notion of causation is inconceivable without the conception of time as a one-way flow. As far as a closer understanding of Ekelöf's attitude towards the notion of causality is concerned, one has to turn to his early Cahier I (1930) for elucidation. In his Cahier I there is no refusal of the idea of causality, strictly speaking; but there is an acute awareness of the human incapacity to uncover that causality due to the fact that a real grasp of causality would imply a complete knowledge of the infinitely long causal chain, rather than just the mere segment with which the notion of causality is usually identified: "-but complete knowledge of a thing is of course impossible since it would only force us to search for endless causal chains upwards and downwards." (-men en fullständig kännedom om ett ting är ju omöjlig eftersom den bara tvingar oss att söka oändliga kausalkedjor uppåt och nedåt.)⁴⁶ Ekelöf's speculation on the human impossibility of unravelling the causal chain given the infinite interconnectedness of things both in space and time has left its traces in the following lines of the Elegy:

Always fare on! Call me the backward one,
a rudiment of one given from the start,

a riveted moment of some event
 which only in its entirety can explain
 my behaviour. (31, 330-334)

Undoubtedly Leif Sjöberg has interpreted Ekelöf's theoretical commentaries to the Elegy and in particular his intention that the poem be a reconstruction of one moment in time all too literally in his A Reader's Guide. What I believe Ekelöf means by the "moment" and the indivisible unit of time or "now" of which the poem is intended to be a representation is made clearer by two important notes of Ekelöf, the first dating from roughly 1927, i.e. long before the idea of the Elegy even came to him:

Our life is in the present; the notions about the past and the future which exist in our consciousness are merely weak images of reality. Does one experience the past by remembering it or the future by construing it? Our life is a present expanded into decades and life a present expanded into millennia. (I'm not quoting Bergson but old truths and the property of every man.)⁴⁷

This idea of a "now" which is expanded to include past, present and future in one eternal moment is clearly applicable to En Mölna-Elegi, where the reader glides effortlessly from one level of time to another. Another comment in the author's notebook K also takes up this concept of the expanded, eternal moment: "I don't believe in the person who looks for happiness in the moment but rather in the one who in the moment experiences the past and the future, who experiences years." (Jag tror inte på den som söker stundens lycka men på den som i stunden upplever ganget och kommande, upplever år.)⁴⁸

Several of Ekelöf's notes to Mölna refer to "a time beyond time, a third time, an odd time" (en tid bortom tid, en tredje tid, en udda tid) or similarly to "time's timelessness" (tidens tidlöshet). This mystical aspect of time in the Elegy has hardly been touched upon by any of the critics who have

written about the poem. The thematic nexus movement-repose ("rörelse-vila") which we have found to be characteristic of Ekelöf is in fact a typical experience of the mystics: "But the combination movement-repose occupies an entirely different place in the works of the mystics than that which is usually devoted to the customary items in the mystics' lists of God's contradictory attributes." (Men sammanställningen rörelse-vila intar i mystikernas skrifter ett helt annat rum än det som plägar ges åt de vanliga leden i mystikernas serier av Guds motsatta attribut.)⁴⁹ The Western mystic Heraclitus writes for example (in Diels' German translation of the Fragments): "Sich wandelnd ruht es aus."⁵⁰ This same type of mystical coincidentia oppositorum comes to the foreground in a description which Ekelöf adds to his clearly mystical poem "Gymnosofisten" ("The gymnosophist") on a plan for "A Mölne Elegy and 7 Preludes" (folder 'Överst'): "The gymnosophist: at infinite speed I move towards the eternally stationary, for I don't move. G. E." (Gymnosofisten: med oändlig hastighet rör jag mig mot det evigt orörliga, ty jag rör mig inte. G. E.) That the idea of the timeless, infinite and yet dynamic present or "nunc aeternitatis" is an integral part of the spiritual experience of the mystics is evidenced by such remarks as the following one by the Zen patriarch Hui-neng: "The absolute tranquillity is the present moment. Though it is at this moment, there is no limit to this moment, and herein is eternal delight."⁵¹ Ruin writes of this "nunc aeternitatis" and its dynamic-static ambivalence, an ambivalence or paradoxicalness which of course cannot be grasped intellectually but has to be experienced spiritually: "God is not only eternal movement; he is also eternal repose. . . . The infinitely dynamic is also the infinitely static. The mystics speak here of an eternal now, 'nunc aeternitatis,' at whose focal point the past, the present and the future meet." (Gud är icke blott evig rörelse, han är också evig vila. . . . Den oändliga dynamiken är tillika oändlig statik. Mystikerna

talar här om ett evigt nu, "munc aeternitatis", i vars brännpunkt förgånget, närvarande och kommande mötes.)⁵² That the experience of time in the Elegy was indeed intended to be analogous to the mystics' "munc aeternitatis" is convincingly borne out by an important note in Ekelöf's English commentary to an article draft of Leif Sjöberg:

"in one moment" should not be over-stressed. "Time" and time. What is it? It is supposed to occur in a lapse of time but outside time, in a mood of passivity and receptivity towards one's self, when everything and anything is possible and near by. The ideal psycho-analytical moment. If the hand of your watch has moved one minute or ten from the point when you started summarizing* your situation, your dreams etc., what matters. It is a moment all the same. . . . even the ideal auto-psycho-analytical moment, which is, I believe, much the same as the moment of "mystical insight" of certain esoterics. . . .⁵³

Looking at the matter more from the point of view of the formal devices of poetry, Hans Ruin has demonstrated in the chapter "Poesiens samlade nu" (Poetry's Collected Present) in his remarkable book Poesiens mystik (The Mysticism of Poetry) that the concentration on the "now" is essentially constitutive for all poetry, for as he writes in the afterword to that same book: "Being bound to the moment is characteristic of lyric poetry. . . . The poet listens more and more closely to that which lies accumulated in a given moment." (Bundenheten vid ett moment är för lyriken karakteristisk. . . . Poeten lyssnar allt djupare in i det som ligger uppsamlat i ett givet ögonblick.)⁵⁴ On the other hand Ruin emphasized the fact that this idea of a given moment is not to be taken too literally. It is a commonplace that poetry has in common with music the fact that both are art forms which unroll or develop in time and thus more than other art forms have time as their constitutive element, but it is one of the virtues of Ruin's book that it

makes us aware of those elements in poetry which run counter to the dynamic, temporal aspect of poetry and accomplish a synthesis of the discrete moments of a particular poetic progression: those largely rhetorical elements such as rhyme, assonance and alliteration which most modern poetry has seen fit to abandon in one degree or another but whose unifying, synthesizing function Ruin has studied under the heading: "Poetry's Collected Present":

It would be a fascinating task to examine how poetry's technical means aim at making just such a contact with a unified, continuous spiritual experience possible. . . .

Think of rhyme. . . . Rhyme is something present which points forward but also backward--a little fact which mirrors the essence of poetry: the synthesis of past, present and future.

But assonance and alliteration also move in the same direction. ⁵⁵

Although we may say that such synthesizing elements as rhyme, alliteration, assonance and repetition are typical of all more traditional forms of poetry and thus help us establish the individuality or specificity of a particular poem in a very limited degree, in the case of a modern poet such as Ekelöf, who in general eschewed such traditional poetic devices, the return to such "outmoded" poetic techniques in a poem consciously devoted to the problem of time ("A Mölna Elegy / A poem / about time / about the time experience" as it is referred to in a series of notes in one of the Mölna manuscripts) (En Mölna-Elegi / En dikt om tiden / om tidsupplevelsen) has to be seen as significant. The effect of such a consistent use of rhyme, assonance, alliteration and repetition as we can observe in the Elegy would be to bring about just such a sense of the static "eternal" moment as we have identified above-- in contrast to the dynamic aspect which any poem by its very essence must have. It is undeniable that the Elegy with its more intentional and systematic use of such rhetorical devices occupies a special position in Ekelöf's

production, a fact of which the author himself was well aware: "As far as the Elegy is concerned, I clearly see the rhetoric, the fact that the whole thing is artificial and made-up. . . ." (Vad Elegin betr ffar ser jag klart retoriken, det konstlade och gjorda i alltsammans. . . .)⁵⁶

The Thematic Nexus of Death by Water and the Theme of Time

That En M blna-Elegi is closely related both thematically and genetically to the poems in Non serviam becomes evident both from a study of the two poetry collections in their printed versions and from a study of the manuscripts to the Elegy. A draft entitled "Den drunknande" (The drowning man) (folder 'c'), for example, is clearly one of the preliminary drafts of the "La Brinvilliers" section (p. 49) of the "Fire Song" (Elds ng), beginning as it does with the lines: "Yes, cast me into the sea / without a banner, without a cannonball" (Ja, kasta mig i havet / utan fana, utan kanonkula). Except for minor variations, however, this draft contains nearly all the lines from the poem "P f gelstronen" (The Peacock Throne), a subdivision of the "Havstema" in Non serviam.

In a note to his essay on Ekel f's "Panthoidens s ng" (The Song of the Panthoid) from the collection "Om h sten" (In the Autumn), Reidar Ekner has written of Ekel f's treatment of the theme of death by water, denying its immediate relevance for that particular poem:

Ekel f is able to view the bones of the drowned man which have been washed clean by water as an aesthetic object in numerous contexts, for example in the suite "Sea Themes" in Non serviam and in "Gerontion" in Excursions. This treatment of the motif of death by water has become common poetic property   la mode and goes back (via Eliot's The Waste Land) to Ariel's song in Shakespeare's The Tempest. . . .⁵⁷

Landgren in his analysis of Ekelöf's early poem "kosmisk sömngångare" (cosmic sleepwalker) has stressed the fact that for Breton and the surrealists childhood had a privileged position in their project of a surrealist "jeu désintéressé de la pensée" and that Breton in his Manifeste du Surréalisme of 1929 associated the surrealist's capacity to re-experience his childhood through the surrealist method with the drowning person's recapitulation of his entire life at the point of death.⁵⁸ That in the case of En Mölna-Elegi one can also speak of a similar project of a "jeu désintéressé de la pensée" and of Ekelöf's association of such an aesthetic effect with the act of drowning is shown by an important series of notes to the "Water Song" (Börljesång, pp. 11-13) dated Mollösund 10 October 1942: "The Billows Song is distracted; therefore don't reject the earlier version. Expand it rather: introduce the drowned man. He drops off to sleep. Is transformed. His thoughts wander." (Börljesången är tankspridd, därför inte försma tidigare version. Tvärtom utvidga: införa den drunknade. Han nickar till. Förvandlas. Hans tankar vandrar.)

The theme of death by water links several of the poems of Non serviam, in particular "Bal des petits lits blancs," "Påfågelsströmen," "Hävsförvandling" (Sea Change) and "De ilandflutna" (Carcass Jetsam), which comprise the "Hävstema," as well as "Emigranten." As far as the Elegy is concerned, several critics have underlined the importance of Ekelöf's participation in the burial of an English pilot on the west coast of Sweden during the Second World War for the conception of the Elegy's lines:⁵⁹

all of us floating here
 floating along
 O these carcasses that float
 that head into the reeds
 but rock uncertainly outside (51, 582-586)

The experience is one which Ekelöf relates in his "novell"⁹(novella) "Från västkusten" (From the West Coast) in Promenader och utflykter. In another "novell" from the same collection, "Klockor över staden" (City Bells), he recounts another experience of death by drowning, this time a childhood experience from the time when his family was living in Blasieholmen in central Stockholm. A woman, presumably a suicide victim, was fished from the waters of Strömmen, one of the outlets of Mälaren into the sea:

Another time he [the protagonist of the autobiographical narrative] had jumped to the window on hearing the arrival of the guards. . . . Somewhere near the statue of Gustavus III there was a gathering of people up to something peculiar. A bloated bundle was fished out of the current with a grapnel hook--it was a woman who had jumped in from the Northbridge. She was hauled up with her head downwards, the voluminous laced bloomers shone white against the embankment, the petticoat hung inside out like a big, greyish white bell with her head as its clapper.⁶⁰

Here we encounter the motif of the bell which Ekelöf appears to have associated almost inevitably with the idea of death by drowning. Just how much Shakespeare's line "Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell" from the famous Ariel's song may have contributed to this association is hard to say. A line from the *Elegy* takes up this thematic nexus and adds to it the motif of the dream, which, as Bengt Landgren has demonstrated, is, in a fashion described by Freud, frequently associated with water or the sea.⁶¹ The line follows the quotation of Swedenborg's eight dreams from his Drömboken (Dream Book) and reads in context:

Jetsam on the beaches of sleep
 Dreams like ringing from the depths
 Oarfish inland-driven
 Grief's soft leviathans (41, 460-463)

Similarly one of the stanzas of "Bal des petits lits blancs" reads:

Give me the eyes of the cuttle-fish
 the gently introverted ones
 as if they heard the secret peal of bells
 bursting through the depths [my stress]

The consistency of Ekelöf's use of particular personal symbols, images and motifs over a long span of time during which his aesthetic views underwent radical revisions has to make us concur with his remark in a note to Sjöberg: "I'm not highly sophisticated but extremely true to, or aware of, my impressions from an early age and always comparing them with later impressions, superimposing themselves."⁶²

That death by drowning had its particular relevance or fascination for Ekelöf during the period in the late 30's when he conceived the plan for En Målna-Elegi and was living with Knut Jaensson and Tora Dahl on Lidingö near Målna (the latter being a frequent destination for his afternoon walks) is borne out by a note in his own annotated copy of the Elegy. Apropos Målna and the complex of houses there, he writes:

Ernst Rolf had earlier rented part of the complex as a kind of holiday resort for his China variety show ensemble. He died there of an overdose of sleeping pills, perhaps drunk, in the water to the right of the jetty, guarded by a big, faithful and rabid dog which hindered all rescue attempts, according to rumours after having surprised Tutta [Rolf's wife] on the spot in flagrante delicto with a Wallenberg, perhaps also as a result of self-hate and bad business affairs. I believe in the poison theory since the water is shallow; the bottomed-out person died at the bottom. This is adiaphora but places have their destinies and destinies their places.

If the fascination of the "near-death experience" (Sjöberg) for Ekelöf is thus obvious, its importance seems to reside at least in part in that particular dilation of the "durée intérieure" with which it is almost always associated; it is, to use Ekelöf's own words when referring to the conception of time in the Elegy, "the ideal auto-psycho-analytical moment." According to Bergson's account of the psychic process which is activated in such moments of crisis, our entire past is conserved in our unconscious as long as the exigencies of practical, everyday action force us to suppress it:

Mais si notre passé nous demeure presque tout entier caché parce qu'il est inhibé par les nécessités de l'action présente, il retrouvera la force de franchir le seuil de la conscience dans tous les cas où nous nous désintéressons de l'action efficace pour nous replacer, en quelque sorte, dans la vie du rêve.⁶³

In the same passage of Matière et mémoire, Bergson goes on to speak of near-death experiences and of the extreme density or plenitude of internal time ("time which bolts / years in minutes," 13, 70-71) (tid som skenar / åratal i minuten) which they represent:

Or c'est un fait d'observation banale que l'"exaltation" de la mémoire dans certains rêves et dans certains états somnambuliques. Des souvenirs qu'on croyait abolis reparaissent alors avec une exactitude frappante; nous revivons dans tous leurs détails des scènes d'enfance entièrement oubliées, nous parlons des langues que nous ne nous souvenions même plus d'avoir apprises. Mais rien de plus instructifs, à cet égard, que ce qui se produit dans certains cas de suffocation brusque, chez les noyés et les pendus. Le sujet, revenu à la vie, déclare avoir vu défiler devant lui, en peu de temps, tous les événements de son histoire, avec leurs plus infimes circonstances et dans l'ordre même où il s'étaient produits.⁶⁴

The poet ("diktare") at the end of Strindberg's Ett drömspel, a play which undeniably has been one of the decisive artistic impulses behind the conception of En Mölna-Elegi, summarizes the effect of such extreme near-death experiences thus: "I read that when life nears its end everything and everyone rushes by in a single défilé ..." (Jag läste att när som livet nalkas slutet, allt och alla rusa förbi i en enda défilé ...) ⁶⁵ Carl Fehrman in Poesii och parodi (Poetry and Parody) has applied the term "livsrevy" (life-review) to this psychological phenomenon and as a dramatic exemplification thereof he cites a scene from the same play:

What Strindberg with dramatic suggestiveness has given form to in this scene is the psychological phenomenon which goes under the name 'life-review.' Most people have heard of this curious psychological occurrence, which has been confirmed by many observers, that people whose lives are in danger see themselves confronted at the point of death with the events of their lives in the form of images like in a film in fast-motion. ⁶⁶

To further illustrate what he calls a "livsrevy," Fehrman cites a passage from Strindberg's Inferno:

Have you noticed in moments of solitude, during the night, or even in broad daylight, how your memories rise from the past, trembling as though newly resurrected, one by one and two by two? All the faults you have committed, all the crimes, all the stupid actions, they come and force the blood even to the tips of your ears, they make the sweat burst even from your scalp, they make the shivers course through the length of your spine. You relive your past life, from your birth until the present day; you suffer all over again every suffering you have ever endured; you drink again all the bitter cups you have already drunk so often; you crucify your very skeleton, because there is no flesh left to mortify; you immolate

your soul because your heart has already been reduced to ashes.

Do you know what I am talking about?

Those are the mills of God that grind so slowly and so exceedingly small--and black.⁶⁷

Interesting to note here besides the theme of the "livsrevy" is Strindberg's association of the recapitulated and re-experienced past in all its infernal aspects with the image of the mill, also a central symbol in En Mølna-Elegi.

In chapter 5 of The Idiot, Dostoievsky has Prince Myshkin relate his witnessing of a hanging in Lyon and give a pregnant description of the last moments or "livsrevy" of the criminal mounting the scaffold:

It's strange that people rarely faint at these last moments. On the contrary, the brain is extraordinarily lively and must be working at a tremendous rate--at a tremendous rate, like a machine at full speed. I fancy that there is a continual throbbing of ideas of all sorts, always unfinished and perhaps absurd too, quite irrelevant ideas. . . .⁶⁸

One need only examine some of the absurd passages of the Elegy and observe its purposefully associative quality in order to realize the applicability of Myshkin's description of a "livsrevy" to Ekelöf's poem with its conscious attempt to convey the contingency with which our resurrection of the past in such moments of crisis is coupled. Bergson for his part has emphasized this "résurrection capricieuse" of the past, this resurgence of memories in a purely contingent order, and distinguished it from the psychological life which we lead in daily existence, which is more objective and governed by the laws of causality in a more apparent way.

In several of the above-mentioned poems from Non serviam which are closely related genetically and thematically to the Elegy, this motif of death by water predominates, thus in "Bal des petits lits blancs," where we even encounter a "livsrevy":

Then the doctor asked
 the nursemaid who had drowned herself
 but been revived by artificial respiration:
 What did you hear? What did you see?

"It was so nice and red there!"
 Well, did you hear anything?
 "O yes, they were playin' music,
 beautiful music!"

One of the drafts to the Elegy's "La Brinvilliers" section has several of the lines which have been included in "Bal des petits lits blancs" and "Påfågelsströmen" and contains, significantly enough, both the motifs of underwater music and red light which Ekelöf seems to have associated with death by water (the draft in folder 'a' has the title "De drunknade" [The drowned men]): "as dead men they are dead / as drowned men they hear music, see red flowers" (som döda är de döda / som drunknade hör de musik, ser röda blommor). Another draft entitled "Den drunknande" (The drowning one) (folder 'c') has the same association of death by drowning, music and the colour red: "One hears music, hears how the mermaid plays, wonderfully / there is music, wonderful music / the coral shines red." (Man hör musik, hur sjöjungfrun spelar, underbart / det spelar, det spelar underbart / korallerna lyser röda). On what is a general plan for the Elegy under the title "Calypso / En Elegi / och X Preludier" (Calypso / An Elegy / and X Preludes), Ekelöf has written: "In Calypso's salen* [Saloon*] / the red twilight" (I Calypsos saleng* [Saloon*] / den röda skymningen). Finally, a draft to the "Billows Song" (Böljesång) has the note: "A bygone moment sub rosa" (En gångens stund sub rosa).

The Topicality of the Elegy; the Elegy as Social-Political Criticism

Reidar Ekner in an already cited note to the theme of death by water mentions the three famous lines from Ariel's song and their transmission through T. S. Eliot as one of the impulses behind Ekelöf's fascination for the theme of death by water. The passage in Ekelöf's own essay "Gerontion" (Promenader och utflykter) to which Ekner refers in his emphasis on the importance of death by drowning in Ekelöf's work can be found at the end of the essay, the main theme of which is Ekelöf's discontent during the war years, his "Unbehagen in der Kultur," his dissatisfaction with the Swedish socio-political structure ("det folkhemiska" as he calls it, punning on the Swedish word "hemsk" [ghastly] and the popular term for Sweden "Folkhemmet" [the People's Home]) and his yearning for escape and for purification from the taint of civilization:

When I die I want to be buried in the sea as an act of cleanliness, have my muscles gnawed off, my intestines dissolved, my bones polished, be properly bathed and embalmed in strong salt solutions to the point of being unrecognizable and annihilated. But the church, which holds watch over the old people's home, will probably forbid that. It knows what the husks of larvae on the reeds also seem to think and rustle their approval to: that power over the dead is to a certain degree power over the living. What does the internal revenue service have to say about that? Doesn't the federal intelligence agency have any objections?⁶⁹

That the theme of drowning at an early point in the Elegy's conception (in particular during the war years) was much more closely related to Ekelöf's social criticism and to his desire for escape from the fetters of society, especially Swedish society, seems to be shown by one of the drafts to the "La Brinvilliers" section. In words reminiscent of the above passage from

"Gerontion," Ekelöf expresses his longing to become merged in the eternal natural cycle and concludes with an attack on the "tutelary society" (förmyndarsamhälle) Sweden: "I shall do my best to die in a country / where the state church doesn't stuff me into its bag." (Nog skall jag dra försorg om att dö i ett land / där inte statskyrkan stoppar mig i sin påse.) The draft continues: "It is to drown I want--not be drowned, / according to paragraphs and regulations." (Det är drunkna jag vill--inte dränkas, / enligt förordningar och paragrafer.) It is significant that both the passage from "Gerontion" and certain lines in the Elegy associate this desire for escape from the constraints of society, which are experienced as painful and alienating, with an identification of the author with sub-human forms of life or "the subhuman" (det nedanförmänskliga) as Ekelöf calls it with a term apparently borrowed from Gustaf Fröding and his "Nedanförmänskliga visor" (Subhuman Songs). In a note to lines 14-15 of Målna in his own annotated copy of the poem, Ekelöf has written: "My loathing and fascination for the subhuman, the insect-like." (Min avsky för och fascination av det nedanförmänskliga insektslika.) If the identification with lower forms of life, be they organic or inorganic, has a political-social dimension as indicated above, it also possesses a more generally human aspect: the isolation in the ego is experienced as a painful enslavement and the identification with unconscious forms of life provides a necessary outlet, for as Ekelöf exclaims in the poem "I den unga sjudande huvudstaden" (In the Young Seething Capital) in Färjesång, a poem which can be viewed as a social-political polemic:

Give me the worthless
 that which has served its time
 and can return to its source
 that which has served enough

to be ennobled by oblivion and neglect!
 Happy things which can be themselves,
 crumble and rust in peace!
 I feel for them.

In a similar way Gottfried Benn can write in his poem "Gesänge":

O dass wir unsere Urahnen wären.
 Ein Klümpchen Schleim in einem warmen Moor.
 Leben und Tod, Befruchten und Gebären
 glitte aus unseren stummen Säften vor.

Ein Algenblatt oder ein Dünenhügel,
 vom Wind Geformtes und nach unten schwer.
 Schon ein Libellenkopf, ein Möwenflügel
 wäre zu weit und litte schon zu sehr.⁷⁰

The various *Mölna* manuscripts and notes validate Sverker Ek's observation that while the work in its first stages may have been more topical and contained references to the historical situation of World War II, over the 23 years of its conception Ekelöf came to eliminate many of the traces of such references, thus lending the work a more general validity:

If it was pertinent in 1946 to stress the temporal connection with the darkest period of World War II when the Nazi troops occupied Europe, it seems that in the long course of the poem's conception it became more vital to underline the timeless and universal aspect of the work's absurd view of life.⁷¹

Several of Ekelöf's notes and drafts to the work do indeed indicate how closely En Mölna-Elegi in its beginnings was related to the war and to Ekelöf's marked distaste for the Nazis: "A Mölna Elegy / a life-mood / a poem about time / about the time experience / about time experience / from Mölna. / a year / during the period / of the great wars." (En Mölna-

Elegi / en levnadsstämning / en dikt / om tiden / om tidsupplevelsen /
om tidsupplevelse / från Mölna hor. / ett år / i de stora krigens tid.)⁷²

A draft to the "Marche funèbre" section (pp. 53-54), one of the earlier sections to be printed (in the journal Ars in 1949) and that section which perhaps reflects most closely the poem's original connection with the years of the blockade, containing as it does the line from Rimbaud "et maintenant le diable est au clocher" (och nu är djävulen i klocktornet) (53, 618) which was intended to be an allusion to Hitler, has the subheading or stage direction "followed by a hate-chorus" (följd av ett hatkör) and the following vehement attacks on the Nazis:

Pigs of Germans!

And whiplash and whiplash on whip-
lash.

Now the Poles are coming. Let them
take care of them. Good! Good!

Let us exterminate them in ourselves . . .⁷³

A marginal note to this same draft reads: "The time of hate. Ultimo 33." (Hätets tider. Ultimo 33.) A general plan for the work has a similar indication of the poem's original more pronounced connection with Ekelöf's hatred for the Nazis: "Politically: block. [-ade] Hatred of the G. [Germans] etc." (Politiskt: avspärrn. [-ing] T. [Tysk-] hat etc.)⁷⁴ Perhaps the only real trace of this vehement attitude towards the Nazis in the final version of the poem is in the lines: "O willows on the banks, O Babylon! / Happy he who taketh thy little ones / and dasheth them against the stones!" (O pilträäd på stranden, o Babylon! / Säll den som flinge gripa dina späda barn / och krossa dem mot klippan!) (54, 642-644)

Biographical Background to the Elegy's Genesis

Given the limited amount of relevant material and the lack of direct, specific commentaries from the author himself, one can only speculate as to why the Elegy was work in progress for so long. This delay is hardly understandable unless one assumes that the poet for one reason or another was not satisfied with the poem as it stood. A few passages from Ekelöf's letters may help illuminate at least the psychological background to the work's conception. They furnish evidence of Ekelöf's continual struggle with a recalcitrant poetic conception. A letter dated 20 October 1941 from Bonniers to Ekelöf indicates that a contract for the publication of En Målna-Elegi was already at this early date under discussion.⁷⁵ On January 10, 1945, Ekelöf wrote to his publishers Bonniers: "The Målna Elegy has turned out leading me along such long and arduous paths that I don't want to force it, especially since I see in it a kind of magnum opus." ('Målna-Elegien' har visat sig föra så långt och så svåra vägar framåt att jag inte vill forcera den, i synnerhet som jag i den ser ett slags huvudverk.)⁷⁶ Already in 1948 Ekelöf can make the premature claim in a letter to his publisher Kaj Bonnier that the Elegy is largely finished and ready for publication:

I only wanted to write you, whom I haven't seen for a while, a few lines about my book, which is 5/6 of the way finished. You perhaps remember that I called a month or so ago and inquired about whether there was a possibility of getting it published this autumn. Of course I was the one who had to disappoint-- but that is not surprising, for the Elegy is such a difficult piece of work that it has taken me ten years, in stages to be sure but nonetheless.⁷⁷

In several letters from roughly the same period Ekelöf speaks of "stealing time for Målna" and laments the distractions which diverted him from

concentrated work on the poem:

As matters now stand, with my criticism in BLM and other additional commitments, I get perhaps one to two days' time a month to devote to the Mölna Elegy etc. etc. and the result is piecemeal. I would for once like to be able to do something complete.⁷⁸

Ekelöf's correspondence maintains an almost total silence on the subject of En Mölna-Elegi until the late 50's when work on the poem, as is evidenced by the 1956 publication of further fragments ("Motivets återkomst" [Repeat of the Motif] and a continuation of the "Kvarnsång" or "Mill Song": see bibliography) in the journal Ord och Bild (Words and Images), was once again taken up in full force. Once more in a letter of 1956 to Dr. Lennart Josephson (of the above-mentioned journal), Ekelöf can lay claim to being close to completion of the work: "P.S. The Elegy, which is finished except for the finishing touches, will appear in 1957 (God willing)." [PS. Elegin som är färdig frånsett finslipningen utkommer 1957 (väll Gud).]⁷⁹ Self-doubts, however, mark Ekelöf's attitude towards the work as late as in 1958, that is only two years before the poem's publication by Bonniers: "It would be good if the book came out at the beginning of autumn so that there would be room in it for Mölna if I'm successful with it." (Det vore bra om boken kom i början på hösten så att plats finns för Mölna om jag lyckas med den.)⁸⁰

According to Pär Hellström's reconstruction of Ekelöf's life during the late 50's, the year 1958 was an unusually unproductive year in the life of an otherwise almost consistently productive writer.⁸¹ The first part of 1959 was marked by a long period of convalescence following a toe operation which had proved to be unusually difficult and by ulcers. On 7 May of that year, Ekelöf wrote in his notebook AC: "Arranged the Mölna papers and shall soon plunge into that pile." (Ordnat Mölnapapperen och dyker väl snart ner i dem högen.) An important entry from the same notebook AC (1959-61) gives

an aperçu of Ekelöf's struggle with the structure and unity of the Elegy and of his continual self-doubts with regard to the work:

I can't be bothered or rather don't want to turn to the previous entry to see how old it is, but I have the feeling that a good deal has taken place since then,

So: my ulcer larger despite an 8 weeks' diet. . . .

However: worked and thought about the Elegy. It looks promising and I have a moderate lucidity and overview vis-à-vis earlier revisions. It will perhaps be finished, even though the connecting part is just as obscure or almost as obscure as before.

In order to avoid the shortsightedness which easily befalls one when one works with a text, not an occasional poem, I drove today to Kolmården and Nun's. . . .

As far as the Elegy is concerned, I clearly see the rhetoric, the artificial and made-up quality of the whole thing, but I think that it nonetheless can become a kind of structure, if only of a fictional character. But has a long poem with more or less cohesion ever been without the fictional element, the make-believe, the fabricated element, the cement which holds together the episodes? The only thing: that can make up for this evasion is an enormous strictness of form, cf. Dante, cf. the hexameter. I don't mean by that that the terza rima or the hexameter rhythm are in themselves strictness of form but they are bearers of it. Strictness of form is on a different level; it is that that I'm after, with other means. Then the episodes will have to speak for themselves.

But I'm sceptical about the whole thing. No one can succeed until after the fact. And it is only all too plausible that the whole thing will fall flat, that the air will escape, as from Romanticism's epics. . . .

Ekelöf's notebook entry is significant in that it furnishes evidence of his struggle to combine the fragmentary-episodic-associative "open-form" aspect of the poem with the aesthetic need for structure and unity; it is representative of what Ek. calls "the problem which lies in being faithful both to the

varying aspects of the content and to the aesthetic demand for structure" (den problematik som består i att på en gång vara trogen mot stoffets mångskiftande egenskaper och den estetiska nödvändigheten till strukturering).⁸² Characteristic of many poets working for the first time with an open structure but nonetheless still under the domination of the traditional aesthetic concept of "organic unity" is, as Ekbert Faas has pointed out with respect to T. S. Eliot and his The Waste Land, an attitude of estrangement and dismay with regard to their own work, fruitless efforts to accommodate the aspects of an episodic form to the traditional demand for unity. T. S. Eliot's retrospective disavowal of his own The Waste Land, his rejection of it as being "structureless" and his vain efforts after the fact to emphasize in a rather artificial way the unity of his open-form poem by insisting on Tiresias as the focal point of the poem's episodes is but one example.⁸³

Various letters from the years 1959-1960 furnish an insight into Ekelöf's final struggle with the Elegy. On August 22, 1959, Ingrid Ekelöf wrote to Ekelöf's aunt Hanna von Hedenberg:

The summer has been very difficult for Gunnar. He was to finish a big poetry collection, perhaps his biggest (the Mölna Elegy), which he has been working on for 20 years but always tripped over. During the last few months now, drinking, brooding and unhappy, he has tried. He has read enormously, worked and worked, several strange poems have come about, but nothing finished. He hasn't gone out, scarcely down the stairs, only sat up in the attic. And his problems are of such a nature that I can never leave the house.⁸⁴

The spring and summer of 1960 is marked by concentrated work on the Elegy. Ingrid Ekelöf wrote to Ekelöf's mother in May of that year: "Gunnar has begun to get absorbed in the summer's work on the Mölna-Elegy and feels quite sure of succeeding so that it can come out in the autumn. But it

will be an ordeal." (Gunnar börjar fördjupa sig i sommarens arbete på Mölna-Elegien och känner sig ganska säker på att lyckas så snart den kommer ut i höst.)⁸⁵ In an undated letter, presumably from the summer of 1960, Ingrid Ekelöf wrote to Hanna von Hedenberg: "Yesterday Gunnar drove into the Karolinska [hospital] for a short rest. He was very worn out but work on the Mölna Elegy has come a long way and we have good hopes that it will be finished this summer." (Gunnar åkte i går in på Karolinska för en kortare tids vila. Han var mycket nergången men arbetet på Mölna-Elegien har kommit långt och vi har mycket gott hopp att den skall bli färdig i sommar.)⁸⁶ After a prematurely interrupted stay at a "torp" or crofter's holding near Gnesta, where Ekelöf had planned to finish work on the Elegy, Ingrid Ekelöf can report in a letter to the author's mother dated 28 August: "Gunnar was very happy to be home and today he wrote out the last of Mölna. He is so happy that he's almost crying!" (Gunnar var stornöjd över att vara hemma och i dag har han skrivit ut det sista på Mölna. Han är så glad att han nästan gråter!)⁸⁷ In almost the same terms Ingrid Ekelöf communicates Ekelöf's satisfaction at the completion of the Elegy in a letter of the same date to Frida Flodquist: "In any case Gunnar couldn't rest. He was happy when we were home again and today he wrote out the last of the Mölna Elegy. He was so happy that he almost cried, and now he is sleeping." (I alla händelser hade Gunnar ingen ro. Han var lycklig när vi väl var hemma igen och i dag har han skrivit ut det sista på Mölna-Elegien! Han var så glad att han nästan gråter, och nu sover han.)⁸⁸ A letter of a few weeks before the above triumphant occurrence, a letter from Ekelöf to Gerard Bonnier, indicates how the poet toiled with the work until the very last moment and nurtured continual self-doubts; it is dated 16 August 1960, that is only a month or so before the official appearance of the Elegy in Swedish bookshops:

Well, now I'm at the point where I don't know if I'll have the Mölna Elegy ready in time for the season. That's ridiculous since three of the sheets are composed, the clichés are being worked on and I have the two remaining sheets practically ready. Only a hyphen is lacking as it were. But in this case--23 years of work now--I'm a perfectionist and can't ask anyone for help. The fact is that for the moment I feel totally overworked, that is to say in such a way that I would rather do something else, for example write a prose piece. When one works with poetry for a long time, especially with such a thing as this, somehow one becomes shortsighted and that arouses distaste and leads to depression.⁸⁹

The Aesthetics of the Incomplete: The Work Process as Telos

During the years immediately preceding the publication of the Elegy, the expectations of Swedish readers with respect to the poem were constantly being built up by the Swedish news media and Swedish critics and every autumn, the traditional time in Sweden for the issue of major new book publications, there were indications that En Mölna-Elegi was finally to appear in print. Under such circumstances it is highly probable that Ekelöf must have felt some pressure to complete the work. At the same time, however, it is undeniable that the insistence on the finished product, on the "completed" literary form, is an element which is conspicuously lacking in Ekelöf's aesthetics in general. Carl Fehrman has studied the importance of the aesthetics of the incomplete in Valéry and maintains that for Valéry the publication of a work was not a significant stage in the creative process but rather a merely fictitious and altogether arbitrary "balancing of the books."⁹⁰ One could easily apply the theme of "Samothrake" to the aesthetics of both Valéry and Ekelöf and maintain that for both the interest of the creative process lay not so much in the end result as in the struggle itself, for the artist learns and

develops not through an illusory completion of the work but rather through the never-ending toil with the literary form itself. Valéry can write, characteristically enough: "Un poème n'est jamais achevé--c'est toujours un accident qui le termine, c'est-à-dire qui le donne au public. Ce sont la lassitude, la demande de l'éditeur, la poussée d'un autre poème."⁹¹ Hans Ruin has emphasized the fact that for the mystics with their awareness of life as an Heraclitean flux and of man's fundamental incompleteness there were two possibilities open to them when they were confronted with that contradiction which lies in trying to seize the inexorable flow of life in an image, thereby falsifying the movement: on the one hand silence (the alternative favoured by Hofmannsthal in his famous "Lord Chandos" letter), on the other hand "to create something to which the finished and the complete is alien" (att skapa någonting, för vilket det avslutade och fulländade är främmande).⁹² From another perspective Pär Hellström has examined the significance of the influence of Oriental and particularly Taoist thought on the formation of this aesthetics of the incomplete. In this context he cites Osvald Siren's characterization of this aspect of Chinese aesthetics:

For them [the Chinese and Japanese] the beauty of art did not consist in the finished, the complete and symmetrical but rather in the irregular and unfinished (i.e. the suggestive), which contained the possibility of growth and movement. Nothing was avoided more painstakingly in art--both during its creation and its exhibition--than repetition and repletion. . . . This is of course in complete opposition to our striving for uniformity and symmetrical conclusion, our inclination for repetition.⁹³

Bengt Landgren concludes with respect to the "Djävulspredikan" (The Devil's Sermon) in Ekelöf's Vägvisare till underjorden (A Guide to the Underworld):

Ekelöf uses the sexual relationship between man and woman as a symbolic image of the artist's relationship to the work of art: the lovers are two "creators," two artists who prefer the fragment, the suggestion to the complete, the perfect work.⁹⁴

Given his continual awareness of life as flux and his corresponding refusal of any categorical system, dogma, institution or ideology ("I can't be bothered with vows, dogmas, grace, creeds, covenants and atonement and forgiveness and whatever else they are called." [För löften, dogmer, nåd, beklannelser, förbund och försoning och förlåtelse och allt vad det kallas har jag ingenting till övers.]⁹⁵), be it of a religious, political or aesthetic nature, it seems only logical that Ekelöf should have elaborated such an aesthetics of the incomplete. This refusal of the static becomes evident in a commentary in the author's Kladdbok 2 (Draft-book 2) dealing with the 18th century's belief in reason and its evolutionary optimism:

Then [in the period of the Enlightenment] there was namely a desire for a stationary world, a fixed point to stand on and with the support of which one would be able to transform the world. This fixed point is a human illusion which may appear vitally necessary but which Heraclitus and others have, as is well-known, rejected. It appears in Marxism's patent solutions of the social problems of surplus value. It can be found in many work hypotheses.⁹⁶

Similarly, in a note from the early 30's in the capsule 'Tidiga manuskript,' Ekelöf writes:

The fictive value judgments have become so universally prevalent that no one knows any longer what truth is. All value judgments are fictive and all judgments are value judgments, even the scientific ones, since they always leave room for the arbitrary. There is nothing certain, no fixed point to stand on--everything flows and changes. . . .

The most direct and detailed theoretical formulation of this aspect of Ekelöf's aesthetics as far as it relates in particular to the work process and the notion of the published, "completed" work is to be found in a commentary to En natt vid horisonten (A Night on the Horizon) (capsule "Sent på jorden": 'arbetspapper' [work papers]), which because of its importance deserves to be cited in extenso:

It is also known to me that this book, my first, at the same time that it gains in fullness also reassumes its original unfinished character. The purely technical conditions for the publication, the printing of poetry cause one, force one, entice one to draw artificial boundaries, to present a poetry collection as an achieved result, a conquered point of view. But in poetic art everything is unfinished and incommensurable as in life. One can't say: I'm happier now, I was unhappier then.

*Something which doesn't lose in being less clear, a "poetry collection" as if it were a finished unity.

Even the individual poem is a monument which often, to fulfill the literary conventions, is supplied with feet of clay in the form of halting rhyme and other "Ergänzungen," just like the statues in the Vatican. And it does not redound to the work's merit that it is the writer, the artist himself who has restored it, in such a way that even the restorations can boast of being "authentic." The writer, if anyone, ought to leave unfinished that which is unfinished. He can be excused because of the fact that he hasn't been allowed to do so by the public—the buyer. But he is to a certain extent responsible for the fact that the readers have been imbued with and have further developed this fiction: The finished, self-sufficient work of art. Such a fiction belongs to a certain immature phase of culture. The savage produces the essential and neglects=leaves up to the spectator's fantasy that which in his [the savage's] vision was unessential or immature. The really great cultures and art epochs have done the same, for example the Eastern ones.

In After Babel George Steiner has defined four principal stages in the act of translation (in the broad sense in which he understands the term: all interpretive acts, all acts of perception are forms of "translation"). The first stage of this "hermeneutic motion," as Steiner calls it, is that of an investment of faith in the object of our translation, a leap of faith which is jeopardized, as he claims, by such non-signifying literary forms as nonsense verse.⁹⁷ Part of this initial act of faith which conditions the entire subsequent interpretive process is based, I would assert, on the untried assumption that the text confronting us is the definitive one. Such an investment of belief is thus at least in part endangered by that entire aesthetics of the incomplete, of the non-definitive, which one must perceive in Ekelöf. That this view of things would apply in a particular degree to En Mölna-Elegi with its only gradual genesis is, I think, substantiated by two commentaries in Ekelöf's own hand. In a letter dated 21 September 1960, that is only about six weeks before the official issue of the poem in book form, Ekelöf wrote to Gerard Bonnier:

The Elegy is as it could be under the circumstances: heavily stratified (since 23 years' work lie behind it), nonetheless unified. Had I finished it ten years ago, it would have been different; if I have the opportunity to revise it in ten years, it will end up being different. Conceivably I would then go back to the earlier original sketches.⁹⁸

The idea of a "fictitious balancing of the books" which marks both Valéry's and Ekelöf's attitude towards the "finished," published work (En natt vid horisonten, "Synopsis": "For only the Artist / can give it all its fictive conclusion by means of a signal for departure: . . ." [Ty endast Konstnären / kan ge det hela dess fiktiva Slut / genom ett utbrottstecken: . . .]) has its special relevance for the Elegy with its long genesis:

1937. The very first draft was 3 lines of which the last one ran "my ten-thousandth sunset." . . . After that the Elegy has grown uninterruptedly and is still growing. This [the 1960 published version of the poem] can be seen as a necessary but temporary balancing of accounts in order to gain a clear picture of the situation[.]⁹⁹

The Aesthetics of the Indistinct and the Active Reader Role

While even a superficial examination of some of Ekelöf's manuscripts and drafts to En Mölna-Elegi would confirm one's scepticism with regard to relevance or applicability of the idea of an organic development of the poem from some kind of nucleus or matrix, the problem of tracing the genesis of the work is further complicated by the largely associative character of the poem and by what one could refer to as Ekelöf's aesthetics of indistinctness, an aesthetics which he was consciously trying to apply in the Elegy. A note to a draft of the "Börljesång" (folder 'c') stresses the author's conscious attempt to give the reader the illusion of participating in the more or less random associations of the poem's lyrical "I" (jag): "Distracted, timeless his train of thought follows accidental lines of association / his thoughts come and go." (Tankspridd, tidlös följer hans tanke-följe tillfälliga associationslinjer / hans tankar kommer och går.) In another similar note Ekelöf again stresses his intention to give the impression of a "compositionless" composition, of a more associative than logical poem: "Think of Beeth. quartets. Voces intimae. / No plot. No composition / only melos / write this as blind o. deaf in / any case as amputated for ex. without the world / . . . Begin at one point, low, / and create an atmosphere. . . ." (Tänka på Beeth. kvartetter. Voces intimae. / Ingen handling. Ingen komposition / endast melos / skriva detta som blind l. döv i / vart fall som amput. t. ex. utan

världen / . . . Börja på en punkt, lågt, / och skapa en atmosfär. . . .) ¹⁰⁰

There seems to be a contradiction between Ekelöf's insistence on the illusion of associativeness and the ethics of artistic craftsmanship which we have come to identify with him, but, as Bengt Landgren has astutely pointed out, Ekelöf's aesthetic attitude can best be characterized by the term balance or equilibrium. In his discussion of Ekelöf's attitude towards the surrealists and the Swede's retrospective refusal of their emphasis on formlessness, Landgren cites a statement from the poet's essay "En Återblick" (Looking Back) which demonstrates just such a desire for balance: "By rhyming alone one does not make poetry, no more than by switching off all formal endeavour and all conscious control." (Enbart på rim gör man ingen poesi, lika litet som på att avkoppla all formsträvan och all medveten kontroll.) ¹⁰¹ Landgren has, I think, perceived an essential element of Ekelöf's aesthetics, both as they manifest themselves in theoretical comments and in the actual execution of poetry. The idea of balance helps us further to accept some of the apparent contradictions at work in En Mölna-Elegi, a poem which is at one and the same time highly rhetorical and associative in intent, in a word a kind of structured structurelessness. It is important to note that Hans Ruin in Poesiens mystik has emphasized the fact that the contradiction between the poet's ability to hypnotize the reader, to create a poetry of suggestiveness, and his application of an ethics of conscious craftsmanship is only apparent:

There is usually a directly somniferous element in poetry. The poet has in many respects the characteristics of a hypnotizer who with certain tricks understands how to put us into a kind of dormancy. That is a fact in the presence of which the seemingly unsurmountable contradiction disappears which seems to exist between what Valéry claims in the poem above and what he advocates elsewhere, namely that the art of poetry demands the utmost in alertness and awareness from its practitioner. As a practitioner,

as a hypnotizer, the poet must be alert in a high degree and in possession of an indomitable will, but at the same time he has to be acquainted with that state which he wants to induce in the reader, i.e. he has to have experienced himself the bliss of indifference at poetry's bosom.¹⁰²

In his "Anteckningar till En Mölna-Elegi," Ekelöf speaks of the "associations (meaningful or meaningless and without a propos)" [associationer (meningsfulla eller meningslösa och utan à propos)] which he has incorporated into the poem and in refutation of the classical "Cartesian" statement of Tegnér "The obscurely said is the obscurely conceived" (Det dunkelt sagda är det dunkelt tänkta) he insists on the right of the indistinct to retain its indistinctness: the poem's speaker

ought to summarize, make distinctly audible what is said in me: so "distinct" that even the obscurely and vaguely felt can remain obscure and vague as it is, as long as it is. Clarity, objectivity consist not in presenting the evident as if it were self-evident and unproblematic, but rather in giving the obscure, progressive path towards clarity.¹⁰³

Ekelöf's formula here is reminiscent of Rimbaud's attempt to define the project of the "poète-voyant" in his famous "Lettre du voyant" of 15 May 1871: "si ce qu'il [the poet-seer] rapporte de là-bas a forme, il donne forme; si c'est informe, il donne de l'informe."¹⁰⁴ In this same context of the aesthetics of the indistinct, one can cite an important note in Ekelöf's notebook Y: "Emphasize the poet as 1 a philosopher 2 religious 3 a musician. Modern poetry's similarity to music: it doesn't give the thoughts[,?] the reasons, but the background to the birth of a thought." (Betona diktaren som 1 filosof 2 religiös 3 musiker. Den mod. diktens likhet med musik: den ger inte tankarna [,?] resonen, men bakgrunden till en tankefödelse.) This

notion that the modern poem should be representative not of the thoughts themselves or of the results of the thinking process but rather of the thinking process itself, of the birth of thoughts in all its apparent randomness or contingency, is again reminiscent of Rimbaud, in particular of his statement in the "Lettre du voyant": "Cela m'est évident: j'assiste à l'éclosion de ma pensée: je la regarde, je l'écoute: . . ." ¹⁰⁵ It is a similar defence of consciously achieved associativeness or of the "charm of the indistinct" which we encounter in Ekelöf's characterization of Edith Södergran's poem "Den speglade brunnen" (The Mirroring Well):

Those who want poetry to have a certain mission and deliver it in a concise and unambiguous language so that they don't have to be left in uncertainty usually feel unpleasantly affected or at least hesitant in the face of this type of poetry. . . . Södergran's poetry is associative and it has to be read associatively; otherwise it doesn't reveal any of its mystery. It will never reveal its innermost mystery; in that respect it is a faded letter whose enigma its owner has taken with her into the grave. But is the aim of poetry really that it should say more of the ineffable than just that it is the ineffable? ¹⁰⁶

In the same article which Ekelöf devotes to a discussion of Södergran's poem, he identifies the associative character of her poetry with the idea of a "levnadsstämning" (roughly life-mood), thus employing a term from the Swedish poet Vilhelm Ekelund, one of the forerunners of Swedish modernism and an artist and thinker admired by both Edith Södergran and Gunnar Ekelöf:

Nevertheless this poem has an important and very precise mission. It wants to present a life-mood. . . . not the results and derivatives of the life-mood expressed in clara verba, but rather the life-mood itself. And as in life thought gives birth to feeling and feeling to thought and capricious associations glitter on the surface of memory's more peaceful stream with its depths of resignation and knowledge of fate, thus it happens also in this poem. ¹⁰⁷

In a somewhat similar way Ekelöf writes of Eliot's The Waste Land as being a kind of "life-mood," defending it against the analyses and dissections of the critics:

One has done one's best to destroy this great poetic panorama--I am speaking not only of The Waste Land but just as much of the many poems before and after--by dissecting it and by attempting to locate all the hidden quotes and allusions, of which a good deal may very well be unconscious, at least at the moment of inspiration. One ought to read it as a life-mood, a life-frieze. It is always the puzzle which is original. . . .¹⁰⁸

The importance of the notion of a "levnadsstämning" for the conception of the Elegy is indicated by one of the plans to the poem (folder 'j'), which shows that the work was also intended to be a kind of "levnadsstämning": "A dream-elegy / A life-mood" (En dröm-elegi / En levnadsstämning). A proof-sheet dated 9 June 1960 also indicates that Ekelöf even at the final stages of the poem's conception considered using "A life-mood" (En levnadsstämning) as a subtitle to the work instead of the term "Metamorphoses" (Metamorfoser) which he finally opted for.

There is a letter of 1933 from the Finno-Swedish poet Rabbe Enckell to Gunnar Ekelöf where the former points to the limitations and dangers of the latter's associative form of poetry; the term "the charm of the indistinct" as applied to this type of impressionistic-associative poetry seems to have been Ekelöf's own:

Your method of letting the new images "explode beside each other in carefully weighed doses," doesn't seem to me to pay sufficient attention to the principle of concentration. It easily happens that the images don't explode due to the fact that they eliminate each other. In order that a poem have an effect, it is necessary that one observe a certain economy in the use of one's resources.

The charm of the indistinct is hidden behind every image which is put forward with energy and art; an excess of images easily leads to a situation where the ideas and associations which the images ought to arouse fail to appear, because the innumerable images prevent the individual images from taking effect just as a herd of cattle which has been crowded together hinders the individual animals in their freedom of movement. It is not enough that the poem should have a musical line, plastic graphicness. And graphicness cannot be attained otherwise than through an extremely calculated use of one's means--I for my part believe that this is best attained through restraint and a carefully calculated heightening of expression--this restraint produces in addition "the charm of the indistinct" which you have so correctly observed that a poem ought to have if it is to be effective and truly poetic. The principle of indistinctness has of course already been observed by the Chinese and I recall that Goethe also emphasized it.¹⁰⁹

Ekelöf's emphasis on the indistinct also becomes apparent in a statement such as the following (from his Cahier I of 1930): "All of literature's masters have written nonchalantly and a bit thoughtlessly. . . . All the best is written in a holiday mood, in a break. . . ." (Alla litteraturens mästare ha skrivit nonchalant och en smula tanklöst. . . . Allt det bästa är skrivet i feriestämning, i en arbetspaus. . . .)¹¹⁰

Related to Ekelöf's project of an associative poetry based on the "charm of the indistinct" is his view that the distinguishing mark of Swedish poetry (Bellman) and of Swedish literature in general is its impressionism:

What makes it possible to name the names C. and F. [Cederborgh and Fröding?] in practically the same breath (and in the background Hj. S. [Hjalmar Söderberg]) is that both have an artistic singularity which one would like to call especially Swedish: the capacity to call forth an overall mood via details. This is conspicuous both in C. and F.¹¹¹

In another commentary (capsule 'OF' 'Opublicerad Försöksprosa' [Unpublished Experimental Prose]) dealing with the Swedish impressionism of Bellman and Strindberg, Ekelöf defends--in virtue of the "charm of the indistinct"-- the writings of his two great compatriots against the charge of being incoherent and lacking in "organic unity":

Almost all of our important writers have been impressionists when they were at their best. Sometimes they have been called realists. Of course neither of these labels says enough, but that they were impressionists comes closest to the truth. They have worked with a kind of abbreviation of reality which in fact has involved an enlargement of reality, an attempt to see the surreal via details. In The Red Room it isn't Falk or the Lill-Jans circle which are the main characters but rather the countless many, society, the Zeitgeist with its occasional well-being or more frequently its unhappiness. To criticize Strindberg because Falk doesn't hang together as a character is therefore in a deeper sense just as unjustified as to criticize Bellman because Fredman, Ulla, Movitz or Mollberg don't hang together. Ulla's face is seldom or never depicted, whereas her "facial expressions," clothes, movements, randy or graceful, the atmosphere surrounding her are. In this way the figures become many Ullas, Fredmen, Movitzes, and it is wrong to claim that collective poetry is something new in our country. But the same figures also become everybody's Ulla, Fredman or Movitz so that it would be just as wrong to claim that no provision has been made for individualism.

This impressionistic way of writing poetry, this gliding between the concrete detail and the surreal whole has at first always aroused criticism from the majority of readers who insist on factualism, logical plot development, platitudes, morality and reason. That criticism, as is known to all, hasn't stopped in our day: it is aimed at so-called "difficult" writers, such as those who demand the active participation of the reader and place demands on his own imaginative work..... [my stress].

It is this same identification of associative-impressionistic literature with the active and not merely passively receptive reader, who thus becomes a kind of "med-skapare" (co-creator), that marks Ekelöf's BIM (Bonniers Litterära Magasin) review of Pehr Osbeck's Dagbok öfver en Ostindisk Resa Åren 1750. 1751. 1752. (Journal of an East Indian Journey in the Years 1750, 1751 and 1752): "the quality which distinguishes all really good literature is not that through ample and complete descriptions it makes the fantasy of the reader superfluous but rather that it leaves it free rein and imperceptively leads it into the domains of the unsaid and the implied." (den egen- skap som utmärker all verkligt god litteratur är inte att den genom rika och fullständiga beskrivningar gör läsarens fantasi överflödig, utan att den lämnar den fritt spelrum eller omärkligt för den in på det osagdas eller underförståddas områden.)¹¹² Once again it is the active reader role which Ekelöf identifies with the lyrical associativeness of an Edith Södergran:

These words provide the melody, but in such a way that they force the reader to be the accompaniment. He has to provide the counter- point. There are not two people who understand a piece of music in the same way and there will not be two people who understand a poem in the same way. . . .¹¹³

It is significant that it is in the role of the writer as active reader that Ekelöf defends his use of the quotation technique against charges of plagiar- ism; how to read and how to write are of course to be seen here as comple- mentary processes:

One can understand and admire a poem which one can't translate. Then one is receptive. One can understand and admire a poem and discover that it can be translated. In that case one is a co- creator. I know that even receptivity implies a kind of co- creativity. But that's not enough. When one really is co-

creative, that is due to the fact that the other poem causes one suddenly to discover oneself, opens a gushing spring as it were. It is for that reason that my own poems sometimes contain quotes. They are not quotes; they are identifications, fragments of poems which I have made my own, so completely that I sometimes can't distinguish them from that which is my own, if there is such a thing, which I sometimes doubt. For everything human is interconnected to such a degree or is to such a degree entangled with everything else that all talk of mine and yours, at least mystice, seems to me to be idle talk.¹¹⁴

Ekelöf's "phenomenological" approach to the process of artistic fruition can best be observed in an early commentary, an early notebook entry in his Cahier I:

"Now someone will probably say," how could one measure the very beauty of a thing? I have maintained that one will be able to understand, purely intellectually, why one thing is more beautiful than another. What one calls the beauty of a thing doesn't lie in the thing itself but rather in the person who looks at it. Beauty and that which resembles the artist's original conception don't lie in the thing itself. A work of art has reached its goal only once it is reborn in the mind of the observer. The work of art itself is dead. The work of art itself is only a dead point of departure which leads the right observer to that mood which the artist intended, which contains a certain possibility which its author intended.¹¹⁵

A final remark made in a letter to Leif Sjöberg concerning the latter's interpretation of Målna can be cited to emphasize the importance in Ekelöf's aesthetics of this notion of the active and free reader or "co-creator":

You've put a few learned things into the essay which I don't know anything about: De Groot and Ying and Yang. But why not show one's erudition, and I'm a democrat in all my being: therefore: the

reader, the interpreter shall have the right to add his own. This is necessary. And it is classical in the real sense of the word.¹¹⁶

In conclusion one can cite T. S. Eliot's defence of St.-John Perse's poem Anabase in his 1930 Preface to his own translation of the poem; in a statement applicable to his own open-form poem The Waste Land and to associative poetry in general, Eliot defends the Frenchman's poem against the charge of being incoherent and chaotic in the following words:

Such selection of a sequence of images and ideas has nothing chaotic about it. There is a logic of the imagination as well as a logic of concepts. . . . And if, as I suggest, such an arrangement of imagery requires just as much "fundamental brain-work" as the arrangement of an argument, it is to be expected that the reader of a poem should take at least as much trouble as a barrister reading an important decision on a complicated case.¹¹⁷

The "Mythical Method" and the Typography of the Elegy

Undoubtedly the most significant development in the genesis of En Mölna-Elegi at least in its last phase was Ekelöf's decision to include in the work a montage of vulgar Latin graffiti, grave inscriptions and defixiones. Sverker Ek describes the effect of the vulgar Latin section as follows:

The insertion of the closed mass of vulgar Latin quotes into this structure, which until then had been entirely literary, resulted in an unexpected contrapuntal effect. Ekelöf, who was always interested in the purely typographical textual design of his poems, has arranged the independent block of Latin texts in the work's central portion on the left-hand pages and his own text on the right-hand pages in the same way that is customary for example in bilingual scholarly editions of classical texts. The

reader is evidently supposed to be induced into experiencing both the identity and the simultaneity of the two blocks of text.¹¹⁸

By such a contrapuntal effect Ekelöf was able to add an entirely different dimension to the Elegy and to establish by spatial juxtaposition a parallel between past and present, a simultaneity of cultural heritage in T. S. Eliot's sense.¹¹⁹ Eliot's own The Waste Land, as is well-known, makes use of this method of juxtaposition: the London of the 20's glides over into Elizabethan London and the jump from one historical plane to another is made effortlessly, as when the poem's "I" meets a previous incarnation of another character mentioned in the poem, an incarnation with whom he himself was acquainted in a previous existence: "'Stetson! / 'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!'" (lines 69-70). In a similar vein Ekelöf writes in the poem "Galjonsbilder" (Figure-heads) in Stroutnes: "And Cleopatra- / isn't that the harbour tavern's Hulda in her shift / risen from the dead and more disturbing in this state / under a different name?" (Och Cleopatra där- / är det inte hamnkrogens Hulda i särk / återuppstånden och mera oroande i detta tillstånd / med förändrat namn?) The technique is of course ancient: Dante in La Divina Commedia jumps easily from one historical-mythological level to another, almost as if he lacked that capacity for historical distancing, for seeing the alterity of past periods of history, which we call the historical sense.

The coup de maître which led Ekelöf to introduce the vulgar Latin texts into his poem and thus to give it a documentary dimension as well as the contrapuntal effect of a continuous parallel between the popular-classical past and the modern seems to have been the result of a moment of inspiration, if we are to judge by a note in the author's notebook AC. The entry is dated 12-13 June (1959?):

Idée, à ce qu'il me semble de première importance.

L'Elégie commence calmement

[. . .]

mais vers les pp 10 ou peut-être 15 avec des vides, la page à gauche par exemple et puis un tas de coquilles ou plutôt graffiti (voir ceux de Pompei), des poèmes grotesques ou lubriques, tous, des phrases depourvu [sic] de sens, même dans mon alphabet. Une espèce de pluie de Léonides, disturbances:

Poèmes: Horse-radish

When an emperor

From the children's town

The series

Graffitis: Yesterday I made Elsa etc.

Prick

Karnalattasprache [?]

It is with complete justification that Ek in his essay on En Målna-Elegi insists on the care with which Ekelöf treated the typographical arrangement of his poetry collections and in particular of the Elegy. Reidar Ekner speaks in connection with the 1962 reedition of Sent på jorden of "Otto G. Carlsund's coloured vignette and the empty pages which in Ekelöf's composition of his poetry suites serve a purpose which is not only aesthetic." (Otto G. Carlsunds färglagda vignett och de tomma sidor som i Ekelöfs komponenterande av sina diktsviter fyller en funktion som inte enbart är estetisk.)¹²⁰ Ekelöf's attention to the typographical layout of his poetry collections is underlined by a manuscript note, a directive to Bonniers regarding the use of the Elegy in the collected edition of his works, which were published in the so-called "blomsterupplaga" (flower edition)- series of the major Swedish poets:

A Målna Elegy / if it is thought appropriate that it be included. In that case it must not be set in a different way than in the original ed. or at least as similarly as possible. That means

that all the spaces (pauses) have to be retained. There can be no question of an ensuite-setting.¹²¹

Ekelöf's insistence here on the importance of the empty spaces or pauses in the typographical layout is especially meaningful in view of the poem's complicated time speculation as outlined above, whereby the poem was conceived as being a representation of one moment in time. What Hans Ruin says of poetry in general and of its "collected present" seems to be an ideal description of the role or the effect of the blank spaces in the Elegy:

Nowhere do pauses, intervals and silent parentheses play such a role as in poetry. In it punctuation altogether has an incomparable importance. One cannot say that one is dealing here with "gaps" or "holes" in the poetic stream, for they are intense moments full of life, gathering points of a kind for what has preceded or perhaps we ought to say something like moments of fulfillment for the transformation which out of the mosaic word-pieces makes an indivisible unity, experienced as a single present "now."¹²²

In a letter to fru Gemma Snellman of the publishing company Rabén & Sjögren, Ekelöf makes it imperative that that particular publishing firm's publication of a section of the Elegy remain as close as possible to the original typographical arrangement of the 1960 Bonniers edition of the work:

The poetry titles you quote--"On Mölna jetty," "Billows song," "The return journey" etc. etc.--are actually only marginal notes of a sort. The poem is one. The title of the selected section ought to be "From A Mölna Elegy. The Introduction." The last part of the section consists of a parenthesis "(Curtain. Lame elves dance)." That should be deleted. The section must, as for the rest, be set observing all the same 'pauses' (larger or smaller blank intervals) as in the original edition in "Our Swedish Poetry" (the so-called "flower" edition) which came out this spring. This is a sine qua non and I request that I be allowed to take a look at the proofs.¹²³

Before leaving this particular aspect of Ekelöf's work, one could mention in conclusion the fact that Ekelöf shares his typographical preoccupations with two other poets which are among his "elective affinities," Mallarmé and Apollinaire. Mallarmé's use of typography to express both aesthetic and philosophical concerns is paramount in his Un coup de dés, a work which Ekelöf cites as one of the inspirational impulses behind his own début collection Sent på jorden.¹²⁴ His notebook A (nr. 9 (---1928)) contains the following Apollinairean arrangement of verses:

Point d'ex
 c
 l
 amour
 m Je veux mordre
 amour
 t ta joue
 i
 o
 n

The Quotation-Allusion Technique

The quotation technique is a literary method that one can follow all the way through Ekelöf's production but it is only in En Mölna-Elegi that it becomes the dominant structural principle. It is interesting in this context to compare the Elegy with "Samothrake," a poem which is closely related both genetically and thematically to it. The dramatic version of the poem with the subtitle "En demokratisk kväxelsång" (A Democratic Antiphon) which was published separately in Bonniers Litterära Magasin in 1943 contains near the end in a section entitled "Röster" (Voices) a veritable pile of quotations from or allusions to Baudelaire, Walt Whitman, Joseph Conrad, Harry Martinson and Homer. Gunnar Tideström in his analysis of

this second, dramatic version of the poem writes:

There is a grandiose thought in this fragment, where voices from past centuries and various nations report at the great inscription, voices from France, England, America, Norway, Portugal, Iceland, Greece and the Orient. But admittedly one has to say that the learned poet is quite undemocratic insofar as he presumes a far greater literary culture among his readers than he reasonably has the right to expect. None other than the poet himself can completely grasp the refined echo effect of the many voices; . . . The method of enriching a poem's atmosphere with half-hidden quotes has much to offer-- Ekelöf has probably learned to appreciate it through T. S. Eliot--but the poet realized himself that he had gone too far and for that reason he deleted the section later on. . . .¹²⁵

Ekelöf has defended the quotation technique as applied in the Elegy against the charge of artificiality and plagiarism by emphasizing that culture is "one and indivisible" (en och odelbar) and by pointing to the fact that the method has been around for centuries.¹²⁶ In a letter to his cousin the musicologist Ove Nordwall dealing with his use of the Södergran lines from "Ingenting" (Nothing) (p. 58 of the Elegy), Ekelöf writes:

And why did I assimilate a quote just as well as Stravinsky? Think of Dante! Think of how Orpheus and Eurydice make their appearance in the andante movement of Mozart's Concerto in A major. And I'm convinced that Gluck in turn got the quote from somewhere else. Slavish imitations don't count, but tradition, which is great and unbroken, does. Etc.¹²⁷

There is a lack of any systematic study of the quotation-allusion technique in literature and one wonders if such an undertaking is even a theoretical possibility given the frequently idiosyncratic or highly personal use of the technique in the work of individual artists. There can be no doubt, however, that the use of such a technique at least in its pre-Romantic

form presupposed an unbroken and unreflected contact with tradition and a lesser emphasis on the role of individuality and originality in art. A good example of such a self-evident use of the quotation in the music of the Baroque period is Bach's adaptation of works by his contemporary Antonio Vivaldi, in particular in his (Bach's) six organ concerti BWV 592-597 or his concerto in A minor BWV 1065 for four harpsichords.¹²⁸

Several of the Swedish critics who reviewed En Mölna-Elegi upon its appearance in November 1960 expressed their estrangement with respect to the application of the quotation-allusion technique in the poem. Lars Gustafsson, for example, wrote in the Upsala Nya Tidning that "the idea of the poem's endless and timeless present has been taken as a pretext for a quotation technique which does not always lead to the desired result; frequently it is more confusing than revealing." (idén om diktens ändlösa och tidlösa nu har tagits som förevändning för en citatteknik som inte alltid har lett till det önskade resultatet.)¹²⁹ Artur Lundkvist in his extremely negative review of the work commented thus on the use of the quotation-allusion technique:

Ekelöf's text can be said to resemble a dog cemetery. But what lies buried there is of course above all allusions and quotations, from the "Song of Songs" to pages from Swedenborg's Dream Book in the original spelling, from Bellman to Södergran. And naturally (out of politeness towards the reader?) without quotation marks. .

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Bengt Holmqvist of Dagens Nyheter was generally positive in his attitude towards the work but emphasized the exclusivity and abstruseness which the use of the quotation-allusion technique entailed. Göran Palm's reaction to the latter was perhaps the most positive, since he maintained that the poem could even be read quite well without any knowledge whatsoever of the sources

of the various quotations, so well had Ekelöf succeeded in assimilating "foreign" material:

The quotation technique-- . . . --it also has its drawbacks, for where does one draw the line between legitimate use and theft in this case?

One asks this with particular uneasiness, not because Ekelöf could be said to have buried himself under a patchwork quilt of quotations but quite the contrary: because he has such a weird capacity for giving even the most foreign quotes an "unmistakably Ekelöfian" stamp with the help of contextual suggestiveness. It is actually possible--I have done it myself at one time--to read A Mölna Elegy as if it didn't contain any quotes at all, despite the archaic spelling and everything else, and this, of course, speaks from a poetic point of view in Ekelöf's favour.¹³¹

Other readers of the poem have indeed experienced Ekelöf's ability to transform foreign material into his own, his faculty of "restlose Verwandlung," in a similar way. In a letter of 6 October 1964, for example, Ekelöf's cousin Ove Nordwall wrote to the poet:

Now I know of course that "be still my child / there is nothing" is Södergran and not Ekelöf. But when I read those lines in Södergran, it struck me how inseparably connected they are with 'Mölna,' and I think I understand why they made such a strange impression in the context where I first came across them. Never so much the Södergran fragment itself (that was never the case), but rather just this epilogue, this human situation. If that was a bad testimonial to my knowledge of literature, it was the opposite to your poem: it belongs to you, not to its fragments and reminiscences. I know of no other example outside of Stravinsky where an artist has succeeded so completely in transforming "foreign" material, in making it into something new, unique and personal.¹³²

In a previously cited commentary, Ekelöf himself stressed the fact that the

quotations which he was accustomed to use in his poems are not quotes but rather "identifications, fragments of poems which I have made my own, so completely that I sometimes can't distinguish them from that which is my own, if there is such a thing, which I sometimes doubt." (identifikationer, diktfragment som jag gjort till mina egna, så restlöst att jag ibland inte kan skilja det från sådant som är mitt eget, om nu sådant finns, vilket jag ibland tvivlar på.)¹³³

One wonders whether Göran Palm's remark about the possibility of reading En Målna-Elegi with profit without any prior knowledge of the quotation sources is not, after all, more perspicacious and less superficial than it would perhaps at first appear, in other words whether knowledge of such sources is not just as much an obstacle as an aid to reading. Much of the criticism that Leif Sjöberg has devoted to the work is an attempt to uncover objective reasons for Ekelöf's having quoted from particular sources, objective insofar as there would be a verifiable motivation, thematic, psychological or otherwise, which could serve to link the source with the new context in which the quotes have been placed. Ekelöf has himself pointed out the dangers connected with such an empirical approach in a note to the same critic concerning his use of a particular Bellman allusion in the Elegy: "The same question has to be asked about your efforts to find objective justifications in Bellman for my quoting of him. The quotes are everywhere of a subjective character." (Samma frågetecken gäller detta att du vill söka objektiva belägg hos Bellman för mitt citerande av honom. Citaten är överallt av subjektiv prägel.)¹³⁴

The reader who is too well-acquainted with Sjöberg's almost obsessive attempts to search out the sources of the allusions and quotations in En Målna-Elegi will, I think, experience a blockage of what Umberto Eco calls the process of aesthetic "fruition" (fruizione), that is to say that the

critical structures which Sjöberg has built up will hinder him in reading the text with anywhere that immediacy which characterizes the initial "temporal" reading of the work. There is a fascinating passage in Opera aperta where Eco describes that gradual but inevitable process whereby our reading of a text becomes spatial as opposed to the initial temporal consumption of the literary work and to such an extent that we gradually develop an almost complete immunity to the aesthetic stimulus. This process of gradual satiation begins in a sense already with the second reading of the work, which constitutes itself, of necessity, more spatially than temporally, since our memory of the first reading imprints on the second a certain interpretive configuration which, for better or for worse, makes it impossible for us to experience--or reexperience the temporal flow of the text:

but in this case the slackening of attention obviously comes into play: a sort of habituation to the stimulus, by virtue of which on the one hand the signs that compose it [the stimulus], by dint of being focalized--like an object looked at too long or a word whose significance we have thought of over and over again--generate a kind of satiety and appear obtuse (there where there is only a momentary obtuseness of our sensibility); and on the other hand, dragged along by the mechanism of habit, the memories which we take with us in the act of perception, instead of being a fresh product of our stimulated memory, form themselves into schemas, summaries of the memories which had been conveyed previously. Here the process of aesthetic fruition is blocked and the form, as it is contemplated, is reduced to a conventional schema in which our sensibility, which has been provoked too long, seeks rest.¹³⁵

To look at the matter from another perspective, if there is anything which the structuralist approach to literature has taught one, it is that the whole of the work of art determines the function and meaning of the

individual parts and that one cannot expect the same individual element to function identically or even in a similar way in two separate and divergent contexts. Applied to the problem of the quotation as it has been assimilated more or less artificially, more or less idiosyncratically into a new context, this truism becomes decisive, for as Wolfgang Iser has written regarding Eliot's use of the quotation-allusion technique:

Die Zitate sind von ihrem ursprünglichen Kontext gelöst und in eine ganz andere Umgebung versetzt. Die Kontextbedeutungen [those of the old context] schwingen ohne Zweifel mit, verlieren aber in der neuen Umgebung die Eindeutigkeit des ursprünglich gemeinten Sinnes. Der neue Kontext setzt andere Bedeutungen der Zitate bzw. der literarischen Anspielungen frei, indem er die durch einen bestimmten Sinnzusammenhang verdeckten „Richtungsfaktoren“ [Ingarden's term, cf. Das literarische Kunstwerk, p. 95] der zitierten Sätze entfaltet. Diese wiederum beginnen auf den neuen Kontext zurückzuwirken. ¹³⁶

Ekelöf's Concept of Tradition and Culture

Ekelöf's use in En Mölna-Elegi of both the quotation-allusion technique in the style of Eliot's The Waste Land and of his own particular variant of the "mythical method" (to use T. S. Eliot's term as applied to Joyce's Ulysses in his review of the novel in The Dial of November 1923), whereby a parallelism is established between the modern period and antiquity (in Ekelöf's case understood in its popular manifestations), cannot of course be grasped without reference to his attitude to tradition. Eliot in his above-mentioned review of Ulysses has underlined the ordering function of the "mythical method": "It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and

anarchy which is contemporary history."¹³⁷ Similarly, George Steiner in his After Babel has pointed out the paradoxical nature of the collage technique as it has been applied in so many modern poems, from Eliot's The Waste Land and Pound's Cantos to William Carlos Williams' Paterson and Gunnar Ekelöf's En Mölna-Elegi: it has been employed in many significant 20th century works which we have come to regard as "revolutionary" and yet, more than anything else, it has to be seen as representative of a desire for escape from chaos, from the total absence of transcendent values which has been identified ad nauseam with the modern period. It is an attempt, however artificial, to reestablish a sense of order and feeling of contact with tradition. Steiner writes of this "dynamic traditionality" characteristic of much of modern art from Stravinsky (one of Ekelöf's favourite composers) to Pound and Eliot in the following terms:

We know now that the modernist movement which dominated art, music, letters during the first half of the century was, at critical points, a strategy of conservation, of custodianship. . . . In twentieth-century literature, the elements of reprise have been obsessive, and they have organized precisely those texts which at first seemed most revolutionary. 'The Waste Land', Ulysses, Pound's Cantos are deliberate assemblages, in-gatherings of a cultural past felt to be in danger of dissolution. . . . The apparent iconoclasts have turned out to be more or less anguished custodians racing through the museum of civilization, seeking order and sanctuary for its treasures, before closing time. In modernism collage has been the representative device. The new, even at its most scandalous, has been set against an informing background and framework of tradition. . . .¹³⁸

This modern--or modernist--use of tradition as a means of self-definition has also a more strictly philosophical dimension, for as Steiner has emphasized with respect to the philosophies of Hegel and Heidegger "being

must engage other being in order to achieve self-definition."¹³⁹ This notion of the impossibility of self-definition without interaction has its most admirable exponent in Sartre, in particular the Sartre of Huis clos (1947). This viewing of the past, of the dead, of tradition as an essential element of self-definition, as a prerequisite for orientation in the present is also to be found in Ekelöf: "Only by following the history of the dead can one get one's bearings and at least find a latitude for determining one's position; after that one has to try on one's own to be the longitude." (Endast efter de dödas historia kan man pejla och få åtminstone en latitud till positionsbestämningen, sen får man själv söka vara longituden.)¹⁴⁰

When examining the modern attitude to tradition, it is above all to T. S. Eliot's famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that one turns, with its statement that "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own [the individual artist's] country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."¹⁴¹ The collage structure of Eliot's own The Waste Land is in a sense an exemplification of this dictum. One of the thrusts of this essay is to attack the overemphasis on originality, one of the values which the modern, post-Romantic period has perniciously inherited from the "Geniekult" of the Romantics:

One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles any one else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors. . . . Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that

not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. . . .¹⁴²

The emphasis on originality as a criterion of artistic talent is also entirely opposed to Ekelöf's insistence on the necessary anonymity of the artist, to Ekelöf's opposition to any personality cult. In a note in his notebook AU (1965), for example, he writes:

It is true what is said nowadays:
 [One says nothing new when one says]
 The work of art is independent of the artist
 lives its own life within its own frame
 in its own light, in its own tonality
 The ancients knew that, who remained anonymous.

Reidar Ekner has employed the terms "egenart" (individuality) and "tradition" in his attempt to characterize Ekelöf's authorship.¹⁴³ That for Ekelöf these two aspects stood in a kind of dialectical relationship to each other, that for him the artist is necessarily involved in balancing, in maintaining an equilibrium between the two is shown by a draft to a review of Salvador Dalí's autobiography (capsule 'OF' 'Öpublicerad Försöksprosa'); Ekelöf's attitude towards Dalí is generally negative and motivated by his belief that Dalí was unsuccessful in maintaining a fruitful and deep relationship with tradition, an equilibrium between the objective (contact with tradition) and the subjective (personal creativity, i.e. a modification of tradition):

The objective and the subjective in art? Both have to exist. No one can be objective without a comprehensive training in cultural history; only on the basis of that can he establish his elective affinities, make his choice--become subjective. Subjectivity alone is--if it is even possible in art--a kind of flabby fastid-

iousness. Objectivity by itself is eclecticism and unproductiveness. An artist's attitude can neither be the one nor the other; it is relative. Thus a relative objectivity whose modifying component is a relative subjectivity—a striving for balance between tradition and innovative creativity. Above all it is important to begin from the beginning, experience all the foetal stages in order to become a human being. No soul, not even Mozart's, is born complete. It has to undergo a second gestation after the physical one.

This organic development cannot be precipitated. One cannot jump over 7 grades in that school and be a ready-made student (which one could perhaps do to advantage in the other school, "the school of learning," but even life's slowness and the constraint of having to plod through the grades at the pace of the worst, that is in the comprehensive school, has its function).

An entry in Ekelöf's "Notbok 1941" moves in the same direction of a balancing between personal creativity and a sense of tradition: "But just as little as I want to refrain from displaying the individuality of my thought (work) ought I to neglect to acknowledge its connections." (Men lika litet som jag vill avstå från att manifesteras min tankes (arbetes) egenart, lika litet bör jag ju underlåta att erkänna dess bundenheter.)¹⁴⁴ A marginal note to an essay draft dealing with the question of Swedish writers and the European tradition demonstrates in a similar fashion Ekelöf's capacity for viewing artistic individuality not in opposition to but rather as a function of tradition and influence: "No one uninfluenced, everyone original, essentially alone. Culture indivisible." (Ingen opåverkad alla originella, i gr. o. botten ensamma. Kulturen odelbar.)¹⁴⁵

Both Walter Benjamin in his theses "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" and T. S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" insist upon the fact that the cultural past is not given once and for all, not eternal and timeless, but rather that there is a continuous dialectic between the pre-

sent and the past through which the past is being perpetually redefined and altered just as much in function of an everchanging and accumulating present as the present in its turn is continually defining itself through its identification with the past, with one particular phase of the past. Eliot, for instance, writes:

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.¹⁴⁶

Ekelöf's similar, if not altogether similar awareness of this dialectic is shown by a note in his Cahier 5 (from around 1933): "Culture isn't past, fixed, immovable but changes continually in the direction of a certain future; is recreated, reformed like the skin of the human body, grows out of its centre: life, content towards the periphery: the past, the ideal, where it gradually peels off like hardened epidermis." (Kultur är inte förflutet, fast, orubbligt utan förändras ständigt mot en viss framtid, nyskapas, nybildas som huden på människans kropp, växer ur sin medelpunkt livet, innehållet ut mot periferien det förflutna, idealet, där den småningom faller bort som hårdnad hornhud.)

Carl Fehrman in the chapter "Gunnar Ekelöf och traditionen" (Gunnar Ekelöf and Tradition) in Poesi och parodi (1957) has maintained that there was a development in Ekelöf from an early more negative attitude to tradition towards

a later more positive attitude, marked by his criticism of "the almost frenzied contemporary lack of tradition" (den nästan rabiata nutida traditionslösheten) and by such statements as the following in what one can consider to be the programmatic statement of this new positive evaluation and defence of tradition, the essay "Vår traditionslöshet" (Our Lack of Tradition) in the essay collection Blandade kort (Shuffled Cards) (1957): "In many ways the Swede is the most consistent patricide in Europe; his watch continually wants to move from twelve to one." (På många sätt är svensken den mest konsekvente fadermördaren i Europa, hans klocka vill ständigt gå från tolv till ett.)¹⁴⁷ In some notes appended to a letter to Karl Ragnar Gierow, Ekelöf deplures "the traditional Swedish lack of tradition, the generations' termination of friendship with each other, the treachery of one era towards another" (den traditionella svenska traditionslöshet, generationernas uppsägande av bekantskapen med varandra, tidsaldrarnas förräderi mot varandra) and states:

There is an unusually undeveloped sense of tradition in Sweden vis-à-vis literature: an educated Swede of today knows nothing of his father's favourite writers and even less of the older generations'. If one compares this with England, America, France, Germany, Spain etc., then the productive relationship between the generations has taken on another aspect among us.¹⁴⁸

Ekelöf puts his criticism of the modern lack of a sense of tradition in even stronger terms in another note: "we live in a tradition and ought to give expression to it. To believe that one can break with the past is an illusion; it is hubris." (vi lever i en tradition och bör ge uttryck åt det. Att tro sig kunna bryta med det förgångna är en illusion, det är hybris.)¹⁴⁹

It is, however, only with considerable reservations that one can accept Fehrman's diagnosis of the evolution in Ekelöf's attitude to tradition, for

as Bengt Landgren has convincingly demonstrated in his discussion of the subject, Ekelöf uses the term "tradition" in extremely varied significations and neither does his early rejection of tradition in the essay "Under hundstjärnan" (Under the Dog Star) (1934) imply a total rejection of all forms of tradition nor does his later insistence on the importance of having a sense of tradition imply an unconditional acceptance of all forms of tradition.¹⁵⁰ Landgren has pointed out that in contrast to his later criticism of the Swedish lack of a sense of tradition Ekelöf's early use of the term had a far more exclusive meaning; his later use of the term has "wider implications and includes not only particular individuals' contributions in the past but also even collective manifestations, the way of life and purely material conditions of times long past." (uppenbarligen en vidare syftning och innefattar inte bara enskilda individers insatser i det förflutna utan även kollektiva manifestationer, svunna tiders livsformer och rent materiella betingelser.)¹⁵¹ This later, more concrete and generally inclusive use of the term is perhaps best exemplified by a poem such as "Torna Zeffiro" (Opus incertum, 1959) with its incessant exhortation "Turn around!" (Vänd dig om!):

So turn around, bending, coughing poet
 toward the youth who played the zither incomparably
 you old lady,
 toward her who wove the bridal sheet
 Turn around, painter, to the time
 when you yourself sized the canvasses
 and you yourself ground your colours
 and you, sculptor,
 toward the time when you barefoot trod the clay
 Turn back fisherman
 to the shore that taught you to fish

Ekelöf's early criticism of tradition was undoubtedly motivated by the iconoclasm of the burgeoning artist seeking to establish himself and has to be seen as an element of his generally vehement social criticism as it finds expression in the essay "Under hundstjärnan," where all social institutions are branded as forms of "death-in-life," as being impediments to the spontaneous flow of life. In what is apparently a reference to Sent på jorden in the author's notebook N, this opposition to "culture" and tradition understood in the limited sense becomes evident:

Suicide poetry . . . Suicide poetry plus almost a mood of museum. What impressions don't the sarcophagi collections of big museums and other vestigia vitae mortisque make on one's state of mind on a grey Sunday with ringing bells, the echoing footsteps of dawdling visitors and the ennui of the early afternoon hours. A thick layer of cultural dust covers our lives. . . .

In an essay "Konsten och livet" (Life and Art) from 1934 in which he deals with the problem of form versus content (a conserving, limiting form versus a continually revolting "livsinnehåll" [Lebensinhalt]) on the analogy of the capitalist system with its strikes and lockouts, Ekelöf expresses an attitude which seems to be characteristic of his early negative assessment of a calcified cultural tradition:

Formal tradition in art inescapably has the character of capital. By analogy with capital formation one can speak of culture formation and by analogy with capital of cultural tradition. . . . Nevertheless it is undeniable that a great deal of modern art from all other points of view except that of the collector reaches up to and surpasses the old masters who have been capitalized on in the halls of museums and in galleries. The process of tradition-bound collecting hinders life's spontaneous creativity. . . .

And under the solid and venerable arches of form, which rest on his shoulders, the artist stands there small and afraid of losing

his inheritance. He is content with the past like an illiterate with the printed word. He is at home with tradition's comfortable guardianship like the invalid with his idées fixes.¹⁵²

What Ekelöf in his early years opposes is the myth of "culture" as an ideal inventory of eternally beautiful objects or artifacts. Culture in his conception is rather the product of a dialectical and productive relationship between present and past; artistic forms and life are not viewed as opposites but rather as elements which mutually condition each other:

To live is not the same thing as to own--a position, a fortune, a style, a culture. One doesn't own one's life; one creates it. That culture which the newspapers daily try to convince us that we own is a millstone around our necks. Culture isn't past, fixed, immovable but changes continually in the direction of a certain future; is recreated, reformed like the skin of the human body, grows out of its centre: life, content towards the periphery: the past, the ideal, where it gradually peels off like hardened epidermis. In this way the life of images is the same thing as life's images, but all of life's, not just those parts which human insecurity has idealized in order to create an imaginary support for itself, a straw which man clings to instead of swimming.¹⁵³

Both implicitly through the structure of works such as The Waste Land and En Mölna-Elegi, where the quotation technique is a structural principle, and explicitly in their theoretical, programmatic commentaries, writers such as T. S. Eliot and Gunnar Ekelöf have indirectly or directly lamented the loss of that sense of continuity which contact with tradition supplies, but as Theodor Adorno has said: "Real verlorene Tradition ist nicht ästhetisch zu surrogieren."¹⁵⁴ Further, a real sense of tradition is in a sense opposed entirely to the type of self-conscious reflection of "tradition" on its own nature that is observable both in Eliot and Ekelöf: "Darüber zu klagen,

Tradition als heilsam zu empfehlen, ist ohnmächtig und widerspricht deren eigenem Wesen."¹⁵⁵

Ekelöf's Conception of History and Classical Antiquity

Walter Benjamin in his "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" expresses an awareness of the fact that "culture" as it is traditionally understood--in its narrow sense--is inevitably the culture of the ruling classes and therefore an instrument of oppression. In his attack on 19th century historicism he writes:

Die jeweils Herrschenden sind aber die Erben aller, die je gesiegt haben. . . . Wer immer bis zu diesem Tage den Sieg davontrug, der marschiert mit in dem Triumphzug, der die heute Herrschenden über die dahinführt, die heute am Boden liegen. Die Beute wird, wie das immer so üblich war, im Triumphzug mitgeführt. Man bezeichnet sie als Kulturgüter. Sie werden im historischen Materialisten mit einem distanzierten Betrachter zu rechnen haben. Denn was er an Kulturgütern überblickt, das ist samt und sonders von einer Abkunft, die er nicht ohne Grauen bedenken kann. Es dankt sein Dasein nicht nur der Mühe der grossen Genien, die es geschaffen haben, sondern auch der namenlosen Fron ihrer Zeitgenossen. Es ist niemals ein Dokument der Kultur, ohne zugleich ein solches der Barbarei zu sein. Und wie es selbst nicht frei ist von Barbarei, so ist auch der Prozess der Überlieferung nicht, in der es von dem einen an den andern gefallen ist. Der historische Materialist rückt daher nach Massgabe des Möglichen von ihr ab. Er betrachtet es als seine Aufgabe, die Geschichte gegen den Strich zu bürsten.¹⁵⁶

A consistent feature of Ekelöf's conception of history and of his thereto related attitude towards culture is a political awareness similar to that expressed by Benjamin; "history" as it has been traditionally taught in the

schools, that is as a collection of dates and great men, is viewed as a complete falsification and one which cannot hide the barbarousness of the ruling classes. It is the entire concept of classical antiquity as "Edle Einfalt und stille Grösse" which comes under Ekelöf's attack:

That conception of antiquity which could be put to the charge of the entire period thereafter but especially from Winckelmann, Goethe, Ehrensvärd onwards, in other words neoclassicism, is in my opinion radically false. Of course there were senators, orators, historiographers, philosophers, even an occasional emperor who spoke in a noble tone in the style of "Edle Einfalt und stille Grösse." . . . But the truth is that even Cato the Elder had farms of a Nazi type for the production and procreation of slaves with a view to sale. . . . "The noble Romans," no thanks, there has never been worse rabble. . . .¹⁵⁷

In a similar vein Theodor Adorno writes: "Inhuman ist aber das Vergessen [der Tradition], weil das akkumulierte Leiden vergessen wird; denn die geschichtliche Spur an den Dingen, Worten, Farben und Tönen ist immer die vergangenen Leidens."¹⁵⁸

In another commentary dealing with his conception of classical antiquity, Ekelöf expresses his opposition to the view that the official culture of that period (that dimension which is now studied in schools and according to Ekelöf romanticized) is necessarily representative and contrasts this official culture with a popular, anonymous undercurrent which he refers to as a sort of antique Middle Ages, sees as the real essence of the culture of the period and regards as having survived into the modern period in the form of a collective unconscious despite the hegemony of the officially recognized but artificially maintained cultural superstructure:

What Winckelmann and other enthusiasts--or schoolmasters--and along with them we have come to call antiquity, classical antiq-

uity, is only the official or officious part of this great cultural complex. What we call the Middle Ages was already present there in seminal form, both with respect to its zealotry or piety and its obscurantism. It was there as an undercurrent, but it often rose to the surface. Furthermore this antique Middle Ages was to a great extent the common people's view of life and religion--and has remained so. The death of "antiquity" is a consequence of the dissolution and disappearance of the ruling classes as well as of the rise of another ruling class which adopted and in its turn applied the usual method and practice of *damnatio memoriae*: "Demolish it, demolish it to the very ground."¹⁵⁹

In the same commentary Ekelöf attacks the belief that the language of the rhetors was anywhere near the real, popular language of the time:

Sometimes it seems to me as if the speeches of the Roman rhetors were never given, nor for that matter the imaginary speeches of the historiographers. What was said from the rostra was something of a considerably greater general intelligibility, I believe. Then Cicero and others sat down and hammered out the speeches in an artificial prose which never was the spoken language and which few would have understood. Thus the Latin which we learn was "dead" even in classical times. . . .

With his notion of an "antique Middle Ages" Ekelöf is not far from Jung's idea of the collective unconscious; in another commentary he writes thus of this popular undercurrent:

About the continuity in the human race's / subconscious history . . . Subconsciously i.e. outside of the banquet speakers' / circle a kind of truth has stayed / alive. . . . Antiquity never stopped living its secret / life despite Winckelmann and the neoclassicists such as / Canova or Thorvaldsen / To deny the classical heritage is somewhat comparable to / when a patient tries to repress / his past--it turns up in the / dreams he might tell some psychoanalyst . . .¹⁶⁰

Ekelöf has left several programmatic statements regarding his views on how a fruitful education in history--including literary history-- would function in schools. Far from being literary, philosophical-speculative or chronological in emphasis, it would instead be documentary and purposefully nonliterary, concrete and naïve, in short cultural history in an almost archeological sense of the term:

How does it help a confused and unruly gymnasium pupil to know something about the cult of reason, utilitarianism and the ideas of the bourgeois revolution when he reads Kellgren and Mrs. Lenngren? He will only come to see platitudes and shabby sens moral. Give him instead the age, its social tone, the dress among high and low, the filth of the streets and the odours, the carriages, the music, even the hits, the painting, even the tavern signs, the sexual mores, the shapes of glasses, the decorations on plates, the food recipes, the cry of the chimney sweeps, the ships on the Strömmen or on the river, the on dits et bons mots of the day, and give it to him graphically. . . .¹⁶¹

It is precisely these documentary aspects held up here as essential means of access to the past which predominate in En Målna-Elegi: not quotes from the classical or traditionally accepted writers but rather Ekelöf's own very personal cullings from travel journals, letters and memoirs, graffiti indicative of the sexual mores of a particular period ("the juiciest things in the history of antique mores" [det saftigaste av antik sedehistoria] to use Ekelöf's own term¹⁶²) and even in an impressionistic form patterns on plates ("old china with seashells encrusted," "a carved calabash" and "a shell of a sea-turtle" [ostindiskt med snäckskal bevuxet, en snidad kalebass, ett skal av havssköldpadda]).

Ekelöf's conception of history is fundamentally realistic, antiromantic and unheroic in thrust and is marked by a resistance to the grammar school's

teaching of history as a collection of great men and by an insistence on the role of the anonymous many. It is also anti-Nietzschean as is shown by a note from 1938 where Ekelöf expresses his aversion for the idea of a "will for power" (Wille zur Macht):

Power is an ersatz. The more time passes the more unreal the great actors appear, while man endures. What is left of Alexander the Great? Not a hundredth part of Socrates, who during his lifetime was obscure. With the aid of time the same will come to be true of Napoleon and Hitler. Not even to speak of such ineffectual measures as Mussolini. "To be nothing more than a human being": that is a noble task.¹⁶³

In a similar commentary from the following year he reiterates his unheroic approach to history:

What piles of manure most great men in history are. Look at today's date and say what you think ideologically and as much as is possible privately of those whom history wants to make big. No, the good, honourable and solid people have rarely succeeded in getting into that society; there certainly must be an abundance of entirely obscure destinies of a solidly human sort. Look for examples of monstrous or stupid people who have been given history's hallmark.¹⁶⁴

Georg Büchner expresses a very similar antiheroic conception of history in a letter dated November 1833 (?):

Ich studierte die Geschichte der Revolution. Ich fühlte mich wie zernichtet unter dem grässlichen Fatalismus der Geschichte. Ich finde in der Menschennatur eine entsetzliche Gleichheit, in den menschlichen Verhältnissen eine unabwendbare Gewalt, Allen und Keinem verliehen. Der Einzelne nur Schaum auf der Welle, die Grösse ein blosser Zufall, die Herrschaft der Genies ein Puppen-

spiel, ein lächerliches Ringen gegen ein ehernes Gesetz, es zu erkennen das Höchste, es zu beherrschen unmöglich. Es fällt mir nicht mehr ein, vor den Paradegäulen und Eckstehern der Geschichte mich zu bücken.¹⁶⁵

It is Ekelöf's emphasis on the anonymous many and his opposition to the heroic approach to history which stands out in his extremely positive evaluation of the Lilljebjörns' depiction of "life on Värmland country estates" (värmländskt herrgårdsliv); their realistic, undistorted and unglorified presentation of Swedish rural life is contrasted to the romanticization and idyllizing of past history as practiced by Selma Lagerlöf in Gösta Berlings saga (The Saga of Gösta Berling) or Geijer:

The two Lilljebjörns, father and son, are nonetheless far less romantic than both Geijer and Lagerlöf and they therefore seem to me to deserve to a greater extent the epithet "classical." Moreover, they are something unusual in Sweden, namely depic-tors, lovers and connoisseurs of human nature. Sweden's history for them isn't incarnated in that of "its kings" or more or less impro-bable cavaliers ['] but rather in simple industrialists, profes-sional military men, riflèmen or other simple people ['] Swedish writers' depiction of old-time daily life has a romanti-cizing touch which makes the entire thing unrealistic, fantastic. Gösta Berling wasn't so brilliant and the kings weren't so power-ful. . . .¹⁶⁶

For Ekelöf history is thus equivalent to the everyday experiences of the anonymous many and not to the high points represented by the great men. This particular attitude, which has its relevance for the structure of En Målna-Elegi insofar as a certain conception of history is implied in the structure of the work with its incorporation of such elements as vulgar Latin graffiti, is further underlined by a commentary which Ekelöf has left behind on the topic myth (saga)-historical reality. In his view the myths

of the classical Mediterranean world, in particular those which seem to contain an admixture of the "historically verifiable" (Homer for one), can neither be regarded as pure myths nor can they be seen as representations of actual, verifiable, empirically given historical facts in poetic disguise. Rather there is an interplay between these two levels, one which Ekelöf expresses by the term "typ-öde" (type- or pattern-destiny). While not denying the possibility that there may indeed have existed an Odysseus or a Homer, Ekelöf claims that the fate of Odysseus (Ulysses) should be seen as a pattern-destiny symbolic or representative of many real, anonymous experiences of a similar configuration. Related to this notion of a "typ-öde" is Ekelöf's belief that Homer has to be considered above all to have been a normalizer or collector of prevalent myths, a creator of the "canon-myth" or "type-myth" from myths in common circulation during his time. Homer himself is thus merely one representative of an entire series of saga-tellers and troubadours. To find an exemplification of this complex of Ekelöfian speculation on the problem of the interference between myth and historical reality, one has to turn to an elaborate note on the subject in Ekelöf's notebook AQ (1966); important here is the author's stress not on the uniqueness or individuality but rather on the generally human representativeness of the classical adventures of an Odysseus:

It is strange to observe people's, especially learned men's attitude towards the problem of the interference of myth/saga-reality. Schliemann was convinced that he had found the graves of Agamemnon and others. Elegen can't get the burn-levels in Troy to tally. Victor Bérard is convinced that Ulysses--that is a real, historical Ulysses--was tossed ashore on the coast south of Palaiokastritsa on Kérkira [Corfu]. As far as I remember he is the one who even tried to determine precisely the drift of a fleet of sail boats from Malta to there as requiring 16 days. In the Odyssey he sees an

exact compte-rendu, something like a logbook or journal. The situation is of course that myth and empirical reality entered into a sacred marriage in the poem. Ulysses is a model-destiny. While one "historical" Ulysses may very well have existed, at the same time there were many Ulysses. While one Agamemnon may very easily have existed, at the same time there were many Agamemmons. Their adventures and deeds may have been "historical" but at the same time they are models for adventures and deeds of a similar kind. To reduce the poem to a single reality which actually occurred (overgrown with various plots) is to misunderstand completely the mechanics of man's, every man's spiritual life. Literature and saga often speak the truth, an archeologically tangible and verifiable truth. But to reduce it to that alone is an unheard of shortsightedness, the construction of a stay-at-home. For this poem is about everyone who was in distress at sea, everyone who got drunk in the ports, everyone who lusted for power and in his lust for power was vacillatory and in his vacillation arrogant, self-assertive, cunning, supposititiously playing about with "the art of the possible (or of the impossible)." If one can verify that this person or that person actually lived, that's interesting but nothing more. It's interesting that there is still a kernel of historical truth after centuries and millennia of oral or written transmission. But the really interesting thing about these destinies is that they involved so many anonymous people over such a long period. Literature is a higher level of truth, a more universal one, not one that is less historical for being linked with so many anonymous mediators, embellishers and, as is often the case, distorters. . . .

Just as unfortunate are the judgments of those who refuse all "historical" speculations on the grounds that the Homeric poems are "only" myths, free fantasies with no roots in reality.

Literature is a combination of reality and saga. . . .

"Mein Freund, die Zeiten der Vergangenheit / Sind uns ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln: / Was ihr den Geist der Zeiten heisst, / Das ist im Grund der Herren eigener Geist, / In dem die Zeiten sich bespiegeln."¹⁶⁷ With

these words of Faust to Wagner, Goethe has touched on the fundamental historical problem, which is also a problem of "translatability" in George Steiner's broad sense of the word: the problem of the efficacy or adequacy of our faculty of historical "Rückempfindung" or retrospective empathy (to use Steiner's application of a term borrowed from Nicolai Hartmann).¹⁶⁸

The modern scepticism towards the possibility of such an historical empathy seems to be general and yet, paradoxically enough, it is a concomitant of that very psychic distance which goes under the name of the "historical sense" and which presumably is a recent development in the history of man. Sartre's novel La Nausée is decidedly marked by such a scepticism with regard to the feasibility of all attempts to reconstruct the past "as it happened," for the first-person narrator of the novel Roquentin, whose sojourn in the provincial town of Bouville is motivated by his historical research into the life of the marquis de Rollebon, comes to realize in the course of the novel disguised as diary the futility, the very impossibility of historical empathy, the entirely fictional nature of his previous attempts to penetrate the life of the historical character who is the object of his research, and eventually decides to write a novel instead.

Yet such an awareness of the difficulty of retrospective empathy is largely lacking in the works of certain 19th century historical writers credited with having laid the foundations of historical research and has motivated the critique of historicism by such writers as Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin. There is an extremely interesting essay by the German literary critic and theorist Hans Robert Jauss which deals with the treatment of history in the works of the great German historian Ranke. Jauss penetratingly demonstrates how Ranke unreflectingly operates with certain narrative structures of a largely literary bias, all the time unaware of the open contradiction which exists between the use of such structures with

their more or less hidden teleology and his own claim to impartiality and objectivity; his entire scheme in other words presupposes a subsequent knowledge--from his modern vantage point looking backwards--of the later course of events, of how things came to be, all the while maintaining the illusion of grasping things from the vantage point of the past (that is as "Historie" as opposed to "Geschichte"). Jauss describes this historical "mauvaise foi" thus:

Mehr noch als der Romancier Scott, der seine Erzählerfunktionen an Romanpersonen delegieren oder perspektivisch verstecken kann, verrät sich der Geschichtsschreiber Ranke ständig durch posteriore Gesichtspunkte und ästhetische Ordnungskategorien, unter denen der Zeitgenosse [of the past historical period] noch nicht hätte sehen können. Dass er den Faden zwischen der Epoche, wie sie eigentlich gewesen, und dem, was aus ihr hervorging, ostentativ durchschneidet, rächt sich in Rankes Vergangenheitsgeschichte vor allem dort, wo ein Moment des Urteils, der Auswahl, Motivation oder Ereignisverknüpfung an sich den späteren Standpunkt des Geschichtsschreibers voraussetzt, gleichwohl aber der Anschein erweckt werden muss, als ob die erst aus der Folgewirkung und Retrospektive ermöglichte Sicht schon die dem vergangenen Dingen inhärente Ordnung gewesen ist.¹⁶⁹

Just as Walter Benjamin in his "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" speaks of a "Tigersprung ins Vergangene" and of the ability to understand the past as the capacity "das Kontinuum der Geschichte aufzusprengen," in the same way Ekelöf in several commentaries speaks of identification as the only means of contact with classical antiquity. This identification is the ability to abstract from all subsequent, intervening developments and to view the past in its complete potentiality and alterity. It requires that one overcome the falsification inherent in the teleological, causal approach to history which undermines Ranke's historiography:

To understand antiquity and relive it requires in addition to copious studies such a total adaptation, rather more an identification than an empathizing, that it is given to few.

Antiquity is completely different. And what one has to do is to abstract more than 2000 years and to see the future-- whether bright or dark, it makes no difference--from their point of view.¹⁷⁰

In an argumentation which exemplifies by its own method that which it is attempting to demonstrate, Ekelöf in the same commentary goes on to "abstract from" the development of Christianity which succeeded the classical world:

It is certainly true that this future came to be "Christianity" and that Christianity to a large extent is a transformed antiquity. But it is not for that reason an heir of antiquity other than very indirectly, several undetermined degrees removed. But nonetheless most of the ideas and patterns of religious behaviour which came to be those of Christianity could already be found among the ancients. But in a different way, unaware of this future which, furthermore, "if it hadn't been for 'if'" could have turned out entirely different. It is this potentiality of antiquity one has to experience and understand; it is not enough to look at it in a kind of retrospective lighting, all the while with hidden thoughts of how things finally came to be and of what destinies we have gone through. No, one has in some mystical way to be in the very middle of this past age in order to grasp it, and not at all at Thermopylae or with Socrates but rather in an ordinary house with its house altar and meagre furnishings or at an ordinary symposium where it wasn't at all a lot of profundities that were brought forth but rather where Attic scholia of the type reported by Athenaios were seen as quite enough.

Ekelöf's belief that an understanding of the classical world or of past periods of history, being in true contact with a tradition or culture, has as its prerequisite an instinctive, intuitive ability to identify with the

past--the past not in its exceptional but rather in its universal aspects-- and that this ability to empathize is not given to all becomes apparent from his criticism of Artur Lundkvist's imitative, journalistic treatment of the past, as contrasted to Harry Martinson's authentic adherence to tradition:

Thus Lundkvist imitates, perhaps without an inkling of it-- Picasso (in Agadir). But Picasso is a personifier-normalizer of the myths of the Mediterranean world. In Lundkvist there are only the remains of what he was able to see there: the contorted posture, the grin, the grimace and the exceptional case. For that reason he is a journalist. In Martinson, on the other hand, there is a lot more, a real belonging to tradition, if not so much harmony. But perhaps the beginnings of a worldwide consciousness of the same sort as that which at one time embraced the Mediterranean.

They are two types of travellers-tramps* [*and storytellers]; the reporter and the one who empathizes and sympathizes; the one who is basically outside and the one who is inside.¹⁷¹

As George Steiner has claimed with respect to Ezra Pound and in particular Pound's translations from the Chinese, the ability to translate--in the general sense in which Steiner employs the term--is not always facilitated by excessive background knowledge, which tends to render the object under consideration dense and opaque, but rather that there is a certain intuitive faculty of mimicry which is able to overcome the lack of expertise: "To this one must add the incalculable stroke of what Pound himself called 'divine accident', the facility, always crucial to Pound's career, to enter into alien guise, to assume the mask and gait of other cultures. Pound's genius is largely one of mimicry and self-metamorphosis."¹⁷² Ingrid Ekelöf has testified to Ekelöf's own almost physical awareness of classical antiquity; his feeling of contact with the dead of the classical world was so intense that at certain moments he could experience their presence as a whispering

or as a slight touch of the hand, as in the poem "Oecus" in Vägvisare till underjorden:¹⁷³

It happens sometimes when I lie and can't sleep
on the bed with its paws of bronze, under the lamp which is silent
that I hear the slaves tattling and whispering nearby-

. . .

Sometimes when I wake up from my sleep or half-sleep
it is as if someone had just touched me
as if someone had clumsily tried to stroke my hand.

Related to this intuitive faculty of entering into the guise of an alien culture, a faculty which Ekelöf seems to have possessed with respect to the classical period, is Ekelöf's insistence on the inevitability, the necessity of subjectivity in the creative-recreative process and his belief in the importance of "elective affinity" in the process of interpretation, translation and reading. This aspect of Ekelöf's aesthetics and world view, an aspect which one would be tempted to call his "theory of elective affinities," becomes evident in the preface to his translations from the French poets in Hundra år modern fransk dikt (One Hundred Years of Modern French Poetry) (1934), where he gives as a reason for his having avoided translating Valéry the fact that he (Ekelöf) lacks a personal affinity for him:

The fact is that I'm convinced that a translator--and especially a translator of foreign poetry--in order to be able to do a satisfactory job has to have a string tuned in the same pitch as the keynote of the poet he is rendering. If the accord is lacking, then every attempt is meaningless. More than anything else it is strong sympathy which conditions all recreation and all selectivity.¹⁷⁴

In a commentary in Ekelöf's notebook O (circa 1938) under the heading "Art. om kritik" (Article on criticism), one finds an exposition of the same idea

of elective affinity:

The person who has written literary criticism knows: a good, worthwhile article can hardly be written if one is not dealing with a book which one sympathizes with, which is good and worthwhile for one's self. A bad, unsympathetic, meaningless article is rarely written about any other book than that which seems to one to be uncongenial and empty. Or indifferent, meaningless. There is no objective literary criticism, at least not for me. I'm subjective and have to defend my subjectivity.

George Steiner too has pointed out the importance of elective affinity in the process of translation:

We have seen that serious understanding depends on a linguistic and cultural experiencing of resistant difference. But the transcendence of difference, the process of internalizing the probabilities of non-communication, of acute doubt as to whether the thing can be done at all, demands Wahlverwandschaft (elective affinity). At close linguistic-cultural quarters the translator often finds himself in a state of recognition. The hermeneutic and praxis of his decipherment and subsequent restatement are those of mirrors and déjà-vu. He has been here before he came. He has chosen his source-text not arbitrarily but because he is kindred to it.

Before leaving this discussion of Ekelöf's theory of elective affinities and its concomitant defence of subjectivity in all acts of translation (in Steiner's sense), one can single out one important similarity which it presents with modern physics: its refusal to admit the separation of the observed object from the observer and its repudiation of the classical notion of an objective description of things. Fritjof Capra has maintained that for modern physics the Cartesian notion of a split between the observer and the observed, a notion which was the very foundation of the belief in an objec-

tive description of the natural world, is no longer tenable and that instead the observer is seen as inextricably involved with the object of his observations; physics has thus become--if it was not always so-- the study of human consciousness in interaction with nature:

The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid. The Cartesian partition between the I and the world, between the observer and the observed cannot be made when dealing with atomic matter. In atomic physics, we can never speak about nature without, at the same time, speaking about ourselves.¹⁷⁶

It cannot be overemphasized that Ekelöf's view of classical antiquity makes no pretention of being in any way a learned view of that particular cultural complex. In a letter to Sjöberg concerning Mølna, Ekelöf stresses the fact that his "view of antiquity" (syn på antiken) "is my own personal one and not a learned view" (är min personliga, inte någon lärd syn).¹⁷⁷ A similar emphasis is given in another letter to the same addressee; here Ekelöf defends his right to an idiosyncratic conception of antiquity:

As far as my studies of antiquity are concerned, they are, of course, odd, unsystematic and based on my needs, not on any scientific foundation. . . . Of antiquity, which reaches us only in the form of fragments and whispers, it is important to have either: 1) a personal view, 2) a stratigraphic view such as the outstanding American archeologists; otherwise one has none at all.¹⁷⁸

Similarly, in a letter to Bonniers regarding his Petronius translations (tolkningar: free translations), Ekelöf justifies his personal, nonacademic

approach to antiquity by pointing to the extreme difficulty involved in reconstructing past historical reality:

There are other sides of P. [Petronius] and of classical antiquity as a whole which are more interesting, but they demand a moral open-mindedness, or rather a psychiatric-clinical interest which I can't account for either. To take the authority upon oneself is not for me, when so much of what we "know" about the classical man is nothing but pure speculation, it seems to me.¹⁷⁹

The lack of a learned or academic knowledge of a past period of history or culture does not of course preclude an essential, intuitive understanding of the subject in question, for as T. S. Eliot has stated on the subject of Shakespeare: "Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum."¹⁸⁰ In a similar direction runs the remark of Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare: "There is a vigilance of observation and accuracy of distinction which books and precepts cannot confer. . . ."¹⁸¹ In the same way Lessing can maintain in his Hamburgische Dramaturgie that Shakespeare intuitively grasped more of the essence of the Greek conception of drama than Racine and Corneille with their rationalist bias and their overemphasis on the externals of drama, on a rigidly applied observance of the three unities for example, could ever hope to grasp.

Ekelöf's depreciation of the official writers of the classical period such as Cicero and Livius, whom he makes the butt of his criticism of Swedish Latin education, claiming that it is still dominated by Ciceronian ideals and all too scholastic,¹⁸² goes hand in hand with his enthusiasm for Petronius, a copy of whose works in the "Loeb Classical Library" edition he claims to have carried with him on all his travels.¹⁸³ It is the documentary quality of the fragments of Petronius, their almost archeological value, that Ekelöf appreciates and contrasts favourably to the more official genres

such as the idyll: "To a great extent these fragments often have the character of graffiti, an ephemeral character which nonetheless doesn't prevent them from putting us in far more direct contact with the everyday life of classical antiquity than many a carefully elaborated idyll." (Dessa fragment har ofta i hög grad en karaktär av graffiti, en efemer karaktär, som likväl inte hindrar dem att sätta oss i en vida direktare förbindelse med antikt vardagsliv än mången omsorgsfullt utarbetad idyll.)¹⁸⁴ It is Ekelöf's stress on the popular aspects of antique culture and daily life, on what one could call--using Ekelöf's own term as applied to his interest in less officially recognized cultural manifestations such as cookbooks and diaries--the "antiaesthetic" aspects of that particular cultural complex as the means of penetration, access or identification available to the 20th century observer which is here significant.¹⁸⁵ Theodor Adorno has given an excellent insight into the problem of tradition and culture when he maintains that a "true" relationship to tradition, at least for the unavoidably "sentimental" writer, i.e. the writer who no longer possesses that unreflected attitude to tradition which is the real sign of an immediate contact with the past, is one which perhaps necessarily focuses on those neglected "shadow" aspects of the cultural past instead of on the great cultural artifacts erected as examples of "timeless" art by public cultural institutions:

Wo die Idiosynkrasie gegen Vergangenes sich automatisiert hat, wie Ibsen oder Wedekind gegenüber, sträubt sie sich gegen das in solchen Autoren, was unerledigt blieb, geschichtlich nicht sich entfaltete oder, wie die Emanzipation der Frau, bloss brüchig. In derlei Idiosynkrasien stösst man auf das wahrhafte Thema der Besinnung auf Tradition, das am Weg liegen Gebliebene, Vernachlässigte, Besiegte, das unter dem Namen des Veraltens sich zusammenfasst.

Dort sucht das Lebendige der Tradition Zuflucht, nicht im Bestand von Werken, die da der Zeit trotzen sollen. Dem souveränen Überblick des Historismus, in dem der Aberglaube ans Unvergängliche und die eifrige Angst vorm Altmodischen fatal sich verschränken, entgeht es. Nach dem Lebendigen der Werke ist in ihrem Inneren zu suchen; nach Schichten, die in früheren Phasen verdeckt waren und erst sich manifestieren, wenn andere absterben und abfallen. ¹⁸⁶

In the programme for a fruitful history education which he presents at the end of his essay "Vår traditionslöshet," Ekelöf cites the presentation of the sexual mores of the past as one of the means by which a real sense of the past can be conveyed. Ingrid Ekelöf has confirmed Ekelöf's particular fascination for erotica, for "det saftigaste av antik sedehistoria." From a more specific point of view, Ekelöf's opposition to what he considers to be the falsification of history in the style of Winckelmann manifests itself frequently in a criticism of the puritanical treatment of classical erotica in modern cultural institutions. He writes thus in a draft for an article on the theme of Latin education (capsule 'K' 'Kommentarer', "After the Latin debate" [Efter latindebatten]): "The falsification of history. The fallaciousness of our conceptions of 'classical' antiquity, ditto of Christianity etc. Ethical norms and blinkers with which our image of the classical world has been oversimplified and even falsified." (Historieförfalskningen. Felaktigheten i våra begrepp om den 'klassiska' antiken, d:o om kristendomen etc. Moralbud och skyggglappar med vilka vår klassiska bild förenklats och rent av lögnats ner.) In the same way in a notebook entry dealing with his impressions on rereading Heidenstam's novel Hans Alienus, he criticizes the latter's prudish treatment of classical antiquity:

Reread my youth's Hans Alienus but only cursorily. As Strindberg said: a symphony of bombast. Yet it contains a lot, despite the

sick elements. . . . But as far as Greece, Rome etc. are concerned, he holds on to Winckelmann's point of view. And the Vatican fig leaves are neatly in place.¹⁸⁷

Anyone who is familiar with the Victorianism of standard classical dictionaries cannot fail to recognize the validity of Ekelöf's criticism.¹⁸⁸ Ekelöf's attitude towards the erotic, towards human sexuality, is best characterized, as are so many other aspects of his thought, as a balancing between two extremes.¹⁸⁹ In a notebook entry (notebook AW 1964) on the topic sexuality-religion, for example, he expresses his belief that Eros--in the global sense in which Freud used the term--lies behind mankind's religious representations, i.e. that religion is a sublimation or projection of Eros:

Religiosity is therefore a projection, flower or fruit, what with a boring term is called sublimation.

Below that and as a prerequisite there is the humus, the growing power, the instincts, lust.

He who denies the sexual doesn't stand nature's test when it comes to the inherently divine.

He becomes a theologian, a dogmatist, a fanatic.

He who overemphasizes the sexual also has a sterility within himself.

This same idea of religion as a sublimation or projection of human desires is taken up by Ekelöf in an unpublished Petronius commentary with special reference to Petronius' line "sed sibi quisque facit" and to his fragment XXVII:

"It was fear which first invented the gods of the world"--the poet touches here on a well-known notion in the history of religion--but now everyone is busy fabricating gods to satisfy their own needs, gods which one can put the blame on or with which one can excuse oneself.¹⁹⁰

This well-known train of thought goes back principally to the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, whose influence on such writers as Gottfried Keller and Jens Peter Jacobsen is well-documented. Feuerbach taught that even theology was a product of the human spirit and that God was nothing but the essence of man, reified and made absolute, perceived and honoured by man as an independent being. Central to Feuerbach's thought was the belief that such a projection of human desires onto an ultimate being, such a schism between the here and the beyond, diverted man from the here and now and was thus pernicious.¹⁹¹ The influence of Feuerbach's thought in this respect on that of Marx is thus fairly obvious. Ekelöf could have become acquainted with Feuerbach's thought closer to home through J. P. Jacobsen's superb novel Niels Lyhne, for which the German materialist's views on religion played a decisive role.

One can observe Ekelöf's position between the extremes of a denial of sexuality—an overemphasis on sexuality in his defence of Petronius against the charge of being a mere pornographer; on the one hand he is critical of the Victorian attitude which has falsely placed Petronius on the Index and falsified him, while on the other hand he is eager to stress Petronius' moral qualities:

Unfortunately Petronius has been put into the shade--this has occurred as a result of propaganda with slow but sure effects which has placed him on the Index, denied him any ethical motivations, imputed to him an empty, superficial and meaningless elegance which he doesn't have, and made him into the pornographer which he is not according to cultural-historical criteria.¹⁹²

The Antiaesthetic and "Over-refinement's Homesickness for Naïveté";

The Poetic Document and the "Gesamtkunstwerk"

In an unpublished piece of prose dealing with the concept of history, Ekelöf's insistence on the value of the concrete, the documentary as an alternative to the distortions of the official representation of history with its tendency to idealize and romanticize becomes evident:

The Nordic Museum with all its knickknacks of patriotic curiosities is a relic of Oscanian mead-horn falsification. Build a kitchen from the 1700's and let people sit down in it. Make a salon--and not just one with nothing but rarities and showpieces--and equip it with a sound background of ghostlike, half lethargic chitchat. Let the credible relic work, as an illustration, as one that is really lifelike. Let the visitor sample the salty food and that which is nearly rancid, the hard-to-chew bread (two batches a year).¹⁹³

Ekelöf's claim that a sense of the past can best be transmitted via the commonplace, concrete details of a particular period can hardly be dissociated from his own personal taste for certain "naïve" cultural manifestations as diaries, travel journals, cookbooks and Almqvist's spelling primer (Orttstavninglära), all those marginally aesthetic or "antiaesthetic" cultural artifacts which Ekelöf is able to conceive of as poetic. That Ekelöf had a highly developed sense of the poetic value of the document is perhaps best exemplified by the following statement in a notebook dated "1941" (capsule 'Sent på jorden'): "I have been a poet and regard poems above all as documents and documents as poetic." (Jag har ju varit poet och anser poem framför allt som dokument och dokument som poetiska.)¹⁹⁴

It is perhaps one of the paradoxes of modern Swedish literature that two such cerebral writers as Lars Gyllensten and Gunnar Ekelöf have both

been drawn towards the marginally aesthetic and that both have become masters of "strunt" (rubbish); both are representative of what one could call, using Ekelöf's own formulation, "over-refinement's homesickness for naïveté" (*överkulturens hemlängtan till naiviteten*).¹⁹⁵ Ekelöf has written about his taste for "anti-art" in the essay "Banalitetens framsida" (Banality's Obverse) in Blandade kort, where he cites Proust as one of his predecessors in this vein. It is certainly not difficult to find passages in Proust which illustrate the author-narrator's surfeit with regard to overly cultivated art forms. Both for Proust and for Ekelöf it is the emotional investment underlying the popular consumer's appropriation of such trivial art forms which lends them a certain dignity and validity, not the object per se; the emphasis is thus rather sociological and psychological than strictly aesthetic. Appropriately enough, it is Edith Södergran's inclination for certain forms of popular art which Ekelöf takes note of when in an essay on her life and art he associates her taste for cheap art reproductions in illustrated magazines with the poem "Ingenting," a direct quote from which he has placed near the end of En Målna-Elegi (58, 706-711):

In Södergran's room in Raivola simple art reproductions taken from cheap Christmas magazines or weeklies were pasted up on the bulging wallpaper. In other instances too Södergran has shown a certain predilection for what one could call commonplaces in the visual world of the time, and Titian's painting was in a sense one of them even if it was only a work of the time from the point of view of the reproduction. This is no weakness on her part, for she often uses these frequently humble, popular illustrations to the theme of mankind's timeless Sunday dream of paradise, the dream of "boundless bliss," in order to contrast them with other images of the shabbiness of daily human conditions and of the hopelessness of mankind's struggle. "A bluer sky and a wall with roses or a palm tree and a balmy wind" from "Nothing" is completely

in keeping with the ideal of decoration and illustration held at the time, such as it can be found represented in restaurant dining rooms or short story magazines.¹⁹⁶

Central to both Ekelöf's estimation of the documentary and of less elitist forms of art is his phenomenological approach to art altogether and his awareness of the fact that the distinction between "art" and "non-art" is merely one of cultural conventions and not an absolute and objective quality of the objects in question. This becomes most obvious in an essay in Blandade kort:

We shouldn't forget that what we regard as literary art is only based on a convention which is constantly being revised. . . . And he who is carried along by this anonymous element which some call the feeling for life and others personality--be he a writer or a reader, a gardener or a fisherman--he is free like the Japanese to see beautiful art in a stone which the sea has sculptured; or poetry in the offers of a flower catalogue. It is only the art-Philistines who believe that art necessarily has to be something which is done according to the academic rules. . . .¹⁹⁷

This same acute awareness of the fact that "art" is not only to be identified with those dead cultural artifacts which the cultural institutions have erected as such but that it can be any natural object for which we are capable of summoning up the lyricism necessary to be able to see it as art can be encountered in another commentary in Ekelöf's hand:

There are extremely beautiful things which no one has ever presented as art and which for that reason have been regarded for the most part as curiosities, for example machines in which thirty years ago no one would have thought of seeing any beauty. A thing becomes a "work of art" only when someone thinks of confronting it, of going to meet it with the desire to understand it as such, of

summoning up a certain lyricism in order to see the beauty in it. Highly cultivated nations such as the Chinese and Japanese have realized this long before us. The last Chinese emperor had a large collection of curiously shaped natural objects. In Japan people paid large sums for beautiful pebble-stones.

The sculptor Brancusi is one of those who at the present time is attempting to create similar art. His endeavours are completely justified. It would in fact be completely justifiable if a beautiful snow-covered mountain or a beautiful ocean beach were to fetch just as good a price as a Michelangelo or a Raphael or whatever they are called. As far as that goes, they (the former) should fetch a higher price. With time Norway will become an extremely valuable land. Let us be thankful that we live in an age where we can still enjoy such aesthetic values as good as free of charge.¹⁹⁸

Although it is also possible to read it as a kind of epiphany in the style of Zen or of the secular "mystics" Proust and Joyce, Ekelöf's poem "Souvenir du Mariage de la Suède aux Pays de Chine" (a section of "Den gamle superkargören" [The Old Supercargo] in the collection Non serviam) can also be read as an exemplification of the above aesthetic attitude: the act of drawing water from two different springs is given the dignity of art. Like the Oriental poets who experienced the profound truth of the gesture of drawing water from a spring or the Zen Buddhist satori which occurs while performing the most trivial gestures of everyday life and is an epiphany resulting from an immediate contact with things, the poet here also undergoes a mystical epiphany. It is perhaps not without significance that Ekelöf in a poem entitled "Vattenprov" (Water Tests) in Om hösten can identify the art of poetry with the drawing of water from a spring:

Then I said to myself:
 The only poets I care about
 are those who with nervous hands
 carefully carry
 a bowl full of blood
 into which a drop of milk has fallen
 or a bowl full of milk
 into which a drop of blood has fallen . . .
 Now I have seen, now I want to see:
 the tight grip on a brimful bowl
 of spring water.

An entry in Ekelöf's early Cahier I from the Sent på jorden period shows that the poet's interest in the "antiaesthetic" or marginally aesthetic, in less elitist forms of art was in no way a later development in his aesthetic views, even though it may have gained in emphasis; as in all other respects one must insist here on the continuity which characterizes Ekelöf's authorship:

Of the art which we have become accustomed to call romantic, I have come more and more to like the simple, that which has lost its éclat and become banal. That which is called bad taste has something endlessly moving and beautiful about it, since it has lost all pretensions of being art. I've become tired of everything which is presented as the last word in art. . . . Torvaldsen's [sic] Christ is movingly beautiful on the wall of a simple room with easy chairs and a sewing machine. Coloured illustrations from The Joy of Christmas. Jules Verne, Marryat, detective novels. . . .

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That this same aesthetics of the antiaesthetic did not lack its relevance for En Målna-Elegi is shown by a note in one of the drafts to the poem which reads (folder 'j'): "Trelawny detective novels / Wallenberg / Marryat Cooper / Woodhouse [sic] Jules Verne" (Trelawny detektivromaner /

Wallenberg / Marryat Cooper / Woodehouse Jules Verne).

How closely Ekelöf associated his attraction to the marginally aesthetic, among other things to letter, memoir, diary and travel journal writers such as Bernhard von Beskow, Ewa Lewin, Madame de Sévigné--to name only a few of those who have contributed to the collage of quotations which is En Målna-Elegi--, to his conception of history and as an element thereof his opposition to the traditional scholastic treatment of history as a study of battles and dates, "causality" and great men, becomes apparent from statements such as the following:

The dead and their experiences, the universally human and every-day, are our memory, seen historically[.]

What do I care about dates or the boots of the Swedish kings?

Thus I turn to what has been written in books of letters, memoirs and diaries by simple, ordinary people, to their everyday life or Sunday.²⁰⁰

Like many other poems in the open-form, the Elegy reads like an assemblage of apparently randomly selected elements, elements chosen almost more for their documentary value than for any other reason. The result is a kind of eclectic, documentary "Gesamtkunstwerk."²⁰¹ Two early commentaries indicate that Ekelöf at an early stage of his development had a positive appraisal of the idea of a "Gesamtkunstwerk," or "universalkonst" (universal art form)-"blandad konst" (mixed art form) in his own terminology. This "universalkonst" founded on a free movement between the various normally distinct art forms is seen as analogous to the flux of life itself, to the interconnectedness of all things:

In daily life everything has of course associations with everything else; everything is connected. Not only sounds have associations with sounds, thoughts with thoughts: in that case the universe would be shattered into an endless number of categories[.]

This repudiation on principle of mixed art forms which nowadays appears to be in good taste is odd. I can accept that from a practical point of view in most cases, but... every emotional experience in life is nonetheless practically conditioned by this free movement between the art forms. An artist whose soul is closed to one of them must very likely have some defect as an artist and the person who is only capable of one thing unavoidably turns into an Arnold Ljungdal. But even if for practical reasons the art forms are prohibited from coming together and fusing in a single one, practically, they nonetheless do so on our inner stage. . . .²⁰²

It is in the essay "Konsten och livet" that Ekelöf's interest in the idea of a "universalkonst" obtains its most systematic formulation; here Ekelöf views the insistence on the purity of the individual art form, on its isolation from any other art forms, as proof of the sclerosis of form which characterizes art once it loses contact with life, with "livsinnehåll," and becomes aestheticism. Ekelöf's positive evaluation of "universalkonst," of which he sees Rimbaud--the Rimbaud of the "Lettre du voyant" who had written: "Cette langue sera de l'âme pour l'âme, résumant tout, parfums, sons, couleurs . . ." ²⁰³--as one of the first advocates, is motivated by his belief that only such a movement between the art forms can enable art to maintain its contact with the source of life and to sustain a productive interplay of form and content. It is such a mixture of the art forms in "universalkonst" which allows art to retain a necessary "konkretion" (concreteness):

On the other hand concreteness is responsible for perspective in painting, for the programme, i.e. the literary stamp, in music. On the whole all concrete art strives to fuse with other art to produce in the richest combination something which borders on the universal art form.

This universal art form which has been a dream since time

immemorial and has perhaps attained its utopia--outside of literature--in the opera, aims at becoming a simultaneous symphonic mixture of all sensory, emotional and intellectual delights. In other words it resembles to a bewildering extent life such as every man desires it should be; life freed from the greyness and monotony of daily existence; life in all its forbidden wealth of feelings, instincts, possibilities, dreams; life in freedom, filled with all that which conventions and the sterilized humanity which goes under the name of morality, the state and religion have suppressed, banished to the night and to silence. In this very fantastic utopia: the universal art form, the goal of art's evolution can be dreamt of: its identification with life.²⁰⁴

Because of its Rimbalidian idealism one may view Ekelöf's programmatic exposition of his views on the "Gesamtkunstwerk" in the above passage with a certain amount of scepticism, but even what has to be a later commentary in Ekelöf's hand demonstrates the poet's interest in, if not entirely unmixed feelings towards, that particular artistic utopia. Here Ekelöf's scepticism towards the notion of a "Gesamtkunstwerk" is certainly more pronounced but it seems to be based more on a realization of the impracticability of such an art form given the overspecialization of the particular artist working in a particular medium than on a complete refusal of the notion per se:

Art is something whole and indivisible. I believe for example that the reason why there are so many insignificant composers is that they have an undeveloped taste as regards painting and literature. They are too specialized, they are "Fachidioten." How often can't one tell this by looking at their choice of romance texts (not even to speak of the treatment) and what can one say about that Scheusal of a "Gesamtkunstwerk," the romantic opera. The same is true of painters, who often have a childish if not a spiteful attitude towards "literature," towards that which they think is literature. The same is true of poets who are so

unmusical that they for example transpose the sonnet form to languages whose natural melody it doesn't suit. Or who in the tinkling of rhymes see the one and only bliss. There is no question of there ever being a "Gesamtkunstwerk." But one would like to see works which have been made by artists who have a versatile sensibility and which would be received by a public with an all-round culture. But for God's sake spare us from the outset such terms as "Gesamtkünstler." To be an artist with versatility of sensibility does not mean that one should be able to compose, be able to paint in order to be able to write. On the other hand one ought to be able to express oneself with versatility within one's limited medium.²⁰⁵

The interest in the documentary, in the poetic value of the documentary lies behind Ekelöf's quote from the epigraphist C. M. Kaufmann in the note which closes the Elegy: "'Die Inschriften sind nicht Denkmäler der Literatur, sondern des Lebens!'" Just as he has chosen to retain "the often grotesque spelling and syntax" (den ofta groteska stavningen och syntaxen) of the vulgar Latin texts in the Latin section of the poem, Ekelöf has conserved Swedenborg's 18th century spelling and syntax in his two long direct quotes from the latter's Drömboken. In both cases it is a definite concern for the documentary authenticity of the subject matter in question--in defiance of all eventual charges of preciosity--which has motivated the author's choice of text. The use of on the one hand a highly demotic Latin text, on the other hand of a Swedish text which even in Per Erik Wahlund's modernization from 1964 poses considerable difficulties for the uninitiated reader, since it possesses a grammar which is often more paratactic than hypotactic, is of course well designed to provoke the protests of the critics insistent on complete intelligibility. It seems to be Ekelöf's almost archeological concern for the integrity of the text from the past, the text whose archaic spelling and syntax is a guarantee of its authenticity, which has

motivated the author's "preciosity." Ekelöf's archeological emphasis on the documentary value of the original spelling and syntax becomes evident in his critique of Per Erik Wahlund's unfortunate modernization of Swedenborg's text in a review written for BLM (1953):

In the first place he [Wahlund] has felt himself called upon to normalize Swedenborg's "barbaric spelling and punctuation." It may well be barbaric or primitive, but in my opinion to do so is to deprive the original of a certain amount of its charm, a charm characteristic of the period, and, without any comparison in other respects, that is a procedure of the same sort as when the Vatican curators took their old chaps and without grasping the antique skin treatment which certain marble statues must have had at one time polished them up, presumably wearing them down several essential millimetres.²⁰⁶

Helen Gardner in her criticism of Eliot's Four Quartets has taken exception to Eliot's use of the archaic spelling and syntax in his quote from Thomas Elyot's The Governour in the first section of East Coker:

The dancing figures round the bonfire are described in words taken from Sir Thomas Elyot's The Governour, where he praises dancing as a type of matrimony. The archaic spelling calls attention to the quotation, which, though apt in a poem dealing with the poet's ancestor's, seems to me a little precious.²⁰⁷

The passage in question reads:

The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie--
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,
Holding eche other by the hand or arm
Which betokeneth concorde.

One finds it rather hard to subscribe to Gardner's appraisal of the Elyot quote: in condemning the use of the quote as affected, the critic seems to be engaging in a kind of preciosity of her own, while ignoring that almost documentary, archeological element of reprise which marks so many modern poems. Nor did Ekelöf find the passage "precious," for in a letter of 6 May 1941 to Georg Svensson of Bonniers regarding translation problems connected with his translation of East Coker into Swedish he indicates his intention of rendering the archaic English with 17th or 18th century Swedish: "I shall replace the Chaucer spelling in section I with 17th-18th century Swedish, the only possibility, since earlier usage would lead to incomprehensibility." (Chaucer-stavningen i I ersätter jag med svenskt 16-1700-tal, den enda möjliga, då tidigare språkbruk skulle föra till obegriplighet.)²⁰⁸ The result of Ekelöf's translation endeavours is his curiously "Swedenborgian" but rather effective rendering:

förbundet mellan man och kvinna
 ij Dantz, will säija vthi Hionelag--
 et täckeligit och wärdigit Sacrament.
 Två^o och två^o, een allom nödhig Paar-Lek
 aff Makar, hand i hand och arm i arm,
 hwilkett beteknar Eenighet.²⁰⁹

The Problem of Unity: The Elegy as an Open-Form

The publication of large portions of En Målna-Elegi in various Swedish literary journals over a period of many years, Ekelöf's established reputation in Sweden as an artist of first importance and the author's own commentaries to the already published fragments of the poem as well as his exposition of plans for its continuation must all have contributed to what has

been called by one critic the "legend" of Mölna. Thus the Swedish poet and critic Karl Vennberg could write on the day before the official issue of the poem: "It's not every week that a critic is given the task of writing about a poetry collection which has already become a legend." (Det inträffar inte varje vecka att en kritiker ställs inför uppgiften att skriva om en diktsamling som redan har hunnit bli en legend.)²¹⁰ Given the excessive expectations of Swedish readers and critics, it was perhaps inevitable that many should experience the poem in its "definitive" form, that is with not a great deal of material beyond what had already been issued as fragments in various journals, as somewhat of an anticlimax. Artur Lundkvist's generally negative appraisal of the work in Stockholms-Tidningen is representative of this latter attitude:

Already in the early 40's Gunnar Ekelöf published fragments of A Mölna Elegy. But only now is this work available, if not completed at least turned over to its readers. . . . In the process it deprives itself of some of the legendary halo which came to surround it. . . . But I doubt that this poem contains the great experience which was expected.²¹¹

At the end of his disparaging review, Lundkvist laments the fragmentariness of the Elegy, its lack of composition and unity:

A Mölna Elegy gives the impression of being a great poem in its conception and aims but fails in the execution. It grasps for magic but loses itself in fragmentariness, in a casualness which disperses rather than liberating. The symbolism peeps out mockingly only to disappear. Ekelöf is unable to raise his process of petrification, his sense of living death up to a unified vision. The result is something broken, a poetry in ruins. . . .²¹²

It is curious to note that T. S. Eliot should employ the same term "ruins"

to characterize the fragmentary, open structure of his own poem The Waste Land (line 430): "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." That one may attribute the open structure of Ekelöf's poem to a mere insufficiency of the artist, as Lundkvist suggested, is disproven by such factors as the intentional associativeness which Ekelöf viewed as one of the effects--effects on the reader--which he was trying to achieve.

Sverker Ek in his important essay on En Mölna-Elegi (see bibliography) has stressed the fact that Ekelöf found in his "musical conception of poetry" (musikaliska uppfattningen av dikt) the aesthetic solution to the problem of how to lend the "compositionless" open-form nonetheless a certain structure.²¹³ This view seems indeed to be confirmed to a certain extent by a more general assertion made by Ekelöf in a note in his notebook E (from the early 30's): "Word-music / which gives the meaningless poem / a meaning / regularity." (Ordmusiken / som ger den meningslösa dikten / en mening / regelbundenheten.) One cannot, however, subscribe completely to Ek's solution of the problem of unity in the Elegy by recurrence to the traditional but nonetheless rather dubious concept of "musical structure," for it is, as Ekbert Faas has maintained in respect to the open-form of The Waste Land, a kind of emergency exit for those critics who are unwilling or incapable of confronting the open structure on its own terms and fall back on the traditional concept of "organic unity," of which the idea of musical structure seems to be a convenient but inadequate appendix.

That Ek is still dominated by the desire to uncover some kind of "organic unity" behind the apparent chaos of the open structure which is En Mölna Elegi is further evidenced by the fact that he resorts to the equally dubious thesis whereby the poem's lyrical "I" (jag) despite all the contingency and complexity which characterizes it would constitute the unifying principle of the poem, a bit in the same fashion as Eliot in his notes to the poem has:

recourse to Tiresias as the focal point of The Waste Land. Ek writes in this respect: "The ego's nucleus, which at the same time listens passively and participates actively, turns out to be the organic unity which is present in the accidental and momentary. Despite its amorphous outlines it is the unifying principle of the poem's structure." (Jagets kärna, på en gång passivt lyssnande och aktivt medverkande, blir den organiska enhet som finns i det slumpmässiga och tillfälliga. Den blir trots sitt amorfa grunddrag den övergripande principen i diktens uppbyggnad.)²¹⁴ If we understand by "organic unity" a unifying principle which is concretely anchored in the determinate code or system of signs which is the poem or text, then we have to admit that this "I" as Ek defines it is in no way materially given; it is rather the result--one of an infinite number of equally valid reader responses--of the interplay between the objective stimulus of the poem and the purely open structure of one particular reader's subjectivity. If we accept Ek's argumentation, we are confronted with an unavoidable contradiction: if the unity of the work is, as Ek claims, "organic," it has to be anchored in the concrete fact which is the text, i.e. there has to be a verifiable, concrete orientation, represented by the signs of the text, which allows the reader to establish or reconstruct the consistency of the work despite its apparent amorphousness; at the same time, however, Ek's analysis presupposes that the reader approach the "I" of the poem as a kind of fictional character or Ekelöfian alter ego and that he be able to accept and eventually overcome the inconsistencies of the poem at least by referring them all to this central "I." But the latter implies a sort of phenomenology of the reader's role which seems to overburden the activity of the reader and undermine the idea of an "organic unity." The supposed explanation is thus self-contradictory. Of course the act of reading can be nothing else besides just such a more or less contingent interplay between the objectively given signs

of the text and the reader's subjectivity, for as even such a formalist critic as Cleanth Brooks with his emphasis on the text as artifact has to admit: "Moreover, the formalist critic knows as well as anyone that literary works are merely potential until they are read--that is, that they are recreated in the minds of actual readers, who vary enormously in their capabilities, their interests, their prejudices, their ideas."²¹⁵ Hugh Kenner in an essay on Eliot makes a remark concerning the latter's Prufrock which seems to have some relevance to the problem under discussion and could well serve as a rebuttal of all attempts to establish the unity of the poem through recourse to the notion that the poem's "I"--be there such a thing--can be viewed as a kind of fictional character:

J. Alfred Prufrock is a name plus a Voice. He isn't a "character" cut out of the rest of the universe and equipped with a history and a little necessary context, like the speaker of a Browning monologue. We have no information about him whatever. . . . Nor is he an Everyman, surrounded by poetic effects: the range of "treatment" is excessive. Everyman's mind doesn't teem with allusions to Hesiod, Hamlet, Lazarus, Falstaff, entomology, eschatology, John the Baptist, mermaids. What Prufrock is, is the name of a possible zone of consciousness where these materials can maintain a vague congruity; no more than that; certainly not a person. You are not in allowing their intermodulations to echo in your mind, deepening your apprehension of an imagined character, such as Hamlet, or discerning his boundaries; Prufrock is strangely boundless; one doesn't affirm at a given point with certainty, "Here is where his knowledge would have stopped," or "These are subtleties to which he would not have aspired." Like the thing you look at when you raise your eyes from this page, he is the center of a field of consciousness, rather yours than his: a focussing of the reader's attention, in a world made up not of cows and stones but of literary "effects" and memories prompted by words.²¹⁶

On the other hand the refusal of the notion of "organic unity" with respect to En M8lna-Elegi does not imply the other extreme of complete formlessness or chaos. As Umberto Eco has made clear in his book on the open-form Opera aperta, there is a sense in which every work of literary art is on the one hand "open," on the other hand structured and closed. Every work of art possesses what Eco calls its own "field of suggestiveness" (campo di suggestività) and no matter how traditional and anchored in a stable world view it may be (La Divina Commedia being the ideal example), it still possesses a certain openness in that it always leaves room for an infinite number of repetitions of the continually varying process of consumption or "fruition" (fruizione) as Eco designates it: "Openness is therefore, from this point of view, the condition of every aesthetic fruition and every enjoyable [fruibile] form as far as it is endowed with aesthetic value is 'open.' It is so, as we have seen, even when the artist aims at an unequivocal and unambiguous communication." (L'apertura quindi è, sotto questo aspetto, la condizione di ogni fruizione estetica e ogni forma fruibile in quanto dotata di valore estetico è "aperta". Lo è, come si è visto, anche quando l'artista mira a una comunicazione univoca e non ambigua.)²¹⁷ At the same time, a completely structureless work of art is inconceivable and a contradiction in terms, since disorder only signifies against a background of order. There is, to continue the summary of Eco's thought, a threshold beyond which disorder or chaos ceases to be "informative" and artistic. In other words, there is a necessary suggestiveness inherent in any true work of art so long as it is not the most banal example of completely referential prose, and yet every suggestiveness is an "oriented suggestiveness" (suggestione orientata). Thus every work has aspects of openness and closure and the terms "open-form" and "closed form" are relative and not absolute concepts.

Another aspect of the problem of unity in the *Elegy* can be insisted upon: the problem of Ekelöf's supposedly evolving conception of the poem over the 23 years during which he worked on it. Ek stresses the fact that the first and oldest parts of the poem are essentially lyrical in quality and more openly rhetorical, whereas the sections composed later on have a more documentary, epic and associative quality: "One seems to observe a displacement from pure lyric poetry towards an epic *Odyssey*, which is entirely in keeping with the previously cited change from lyrical fiction to the literary 'document.'" (Man tycker sig kunna iaktta en förskjutning från central-lyrik till episk odysseé, som ligger helt i linje med den redan påpekade förändringen från lyrisk fiktion till litterärt "dokument".)²¹⁸

Pär Hellström in his dissertation on Ekelöf's "Strountes poetry" (*Strountesdiktning*) mentions briefly the problem of unity of composition in *En Mölna-Elegi*. His emphasis is on Ekelöf's revision of his aesthetic views towards a poetics of the "antiaesthetic" during the 50's and the impact that this revision had on the "work in progress" *En Mölna-Elegi*: the interest in musically orchestrated works in the grand format gave place to an interest in the less polished, the purposefully incomplete, fragmentary and associative-suggestive. The result of this development in the poet's aesthetics was, according to Hellström, the rupture between the essentially lyrical quality of the poem's beginning and the merely associative, documentary character of the last sections to be completed, in particular such elements as the use of vulgar Latin graffiti. Hellström stresses the chaotic effect that this revised conception of art had on the structure of the poem as a whole:

The difficulties which Ekelöf had in completing *A Mölna Elegy* can very well be thought to be due to the form in which the great

poem had been conceived and which was now experienced as inappropriate or out-of-date. The richly orchestrated and many-sided composition gave way to a poetry of the unpolished and purely suggestive. . . .

The fragmentary and chaotic impression that A Mölna Elegy makes appears in this light to be unavoidable. During the decades during which the poem came into being, Ekelöf came to revise his views on art. In the published version the two methods of composition which the poet struggled with during the lengthy period of composition clash with each other. In this respect the Elegy is an unusually telling testimonial to the changes in his conception of art.²¹⁹

In view of Ekelöf's very early interest in such aspects of poetry as the "charm of the indistinct" and his refusal of an all too strict and academic approach to the problem of unity (witness his defence of The Red Room against the charge of having no unity²²⁰), it is only with reservations that one can accept Hellström's view that Ekelöf's aesthetic views underwent a radical revision and that the result of this revision can be seen in the "chaotic" effect which En Mölna-Elegi makes. Hellström's insistence on the importance of unity as an artistic criterion is all the more surprising coming from a critic who has demonstrated an acute awareness of those very same aspects of Ekelöf's aesthetics which motivated his use of the open-form.²²¹

The obsession of contemporary academic criticism with the problem of unity seems to be an attitude least likely to give an adequate representation of the essence of modern open-form poetry such as Eliot's The Waste Land, Ezra Pound's Cantos, William Carlos Williams' Paterson or Gunnar Ekelöf's En Mölna-Elegi. With his formalist critic's credo of 1951, Cleanth Brooks can serve as an example of the critic who demonstrates an excessive concern for problems of unity when he writes "That the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity--the kind of whole which the literary

work forms or fails to form, and the relation of the various parts to each other in building up this whole."²²² This concept of "organic unity," as the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics indicates, goes back as far as Plato's dialogue Phaedrus, where Socrates develops the concept in his discussion of the ideal discourse:²²³

Well, there is one point at least which I think you will admit, namely that any discourse ought to be constructed like a living creature, with its own body, as it were; it must not lack either head or feet; it must have a middle and extremities so composed as to suit each other and the whole work.²²⁴

Socrates speaks further of bringing "a dispersed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together."²²⁵

The incapacity of such a concept as "organic unity" to deal effectively with certain literary forms, all the way from classical Greco-Roman literature itself to Montaigne's Essais, is obvious. Hugo Friedrich in his critical masterpiece Montaigne has described the rise of the open-form in Renaissance literature of the 15th century (Rabelais, Erasmus, Montaigne).²²⁶

There is a long metapoetic passage in the essay "De la vanité" (Livre III, Chapitre IX) where Montaigne explains and justifies his conscious and deliberate cultivation of "disorder" as a means of necessitating the active participation of the reader; in a sense he is here justifying his use of the open-form:

J'entends que la matiere se distingue soy-mesmes. Elle montre assez où elle se change, où elle conclud, où elle commence, où elle se reprend, sans l'entrelasser de parolles de liaison et de coustre introduictes pour le service des oreilles foibles et nonchallantes, et sans mē gloser moy-mesme. Qui est celuy qui n'ayme mieux n'estre pas leu que de l'estre en dormant ou en fuyant? . . .

Puisque je ne puis arrester l'attention du lecteur par le
 pois, "manco male" s'il advient que je l'arreste par mon
 embrouilleure. . . .²²⁷

Egbert Faas has summarized the inadequacy of criticism dominated by the
 concept of unity or holism to deal with works in the open-form:

Die akademische Literaturkritik hat, von wenigen Ausnahmen
 abgesehen, diese Lehre noch nicht zu ziehen vermocht. Was sich
 zumindest aus unserer Warte als unzweifelhaft offene Struktur
 erweist, wird von ihr entweder in das Prokrustesbett einer veralteten
 Vorstellung von der Einheit des Dichtwerks zu zwingen ver-
 sucht oder nach dem gleichen Prinzip als strukturlos abgetan.²²⁸

Faas goes on to cite the criticism of The Waste Land as an example of the
 limitations of holistic interpretation:

Die Sekundärliteratur zum Waste Land bietet nur zahlreichere Bei-
 spiele desselben gegenwartsfernen Unverstands. So bezeichnen die
 meisten Kritiker das Gedicht entweder--wie Eliot selbst--als struk-
 turlos, oder sie entdecken darin eine mehr oder weniger fragwürdige
 Einheit des Themas oder Aufbaus, archetypisch-mythologischer „pat-
 terns“, der Aussageperspektive oder musikalischer Strukturen. Ob
 die Holismusvorstellung überhaupt auf das Gedicht anwendbar ist,
 wird nur in den wenigsten Fällen gefragt. Und selbst, wo z.B. bei
 I. A. Richards derlei Zweifel laut werden, führen diese nicht zu
 dem Versuch, das Gedicht ausserhalb der fast unsere gesamte Litera-
 turkritik beherrschenden Vorstellung von der Einheit des Dicht-
 werks zu deuten.²²⁹

In support of Faas' conclusions with respect to The Waste Land as an open-
 form poem, one can cite the excellent essay of Wolfgang Iser which deals
 with Eliot's poem. Iser convincingly demonstrates how the reader's con-
 sciousness or "Reflexion" in its attempts to establish the consistency or
 unity of the poem eventually comes to totally contradictory conclusions and

ultimately is forced to deny that the poem possesses unity in any traditional sense:

Würde es der Reflexion gelingen, die in den Hinweisen versteckten Zusammenhängen zu einer umfassenden Integration zu bringen, so wäre eine solche Dichtung nichts weiter als ein Rätsel für Kündige und Gelehrte. Die Eliotkommentare lassen tatsächlich manchmal diesen Eindruck aufkommen. Es wird eine Konsistenz zwischen allen ausgearbeiteten Möglichkeiten hergestellt, die das erzeugte Gesamtbild bisweilen als höchst abstrus erscheinen lässt. . . . Die von der Reflexion erfahrenen Konsistenzbrüche erscheinen als Aufforderung zu unentwegter Suche, in deren Verlauf alle Anspielungen auf ihre zusammenhangsbildende Funktion befragt werden. Die dadurch freigesetzte Produktivität erfährt aber alle von ihr artikulierten Entwürfe, das Ganze in einen durchgängigen Zusammenhang zu bringen als eine Fiktion.²³⁰

"There is no subject in which we must proceed with more caution than in tracing the history of the arts and sciences; lest we assign causes which never existed and reduce what is merely contingent to stable and universal principles."
(David Hume)

"Influence scholarship should be re-examined altogether; the inclination towards this causality mania reduced. The relatively minor importance of literary influences compared with other things in the way of impulses which life has to offer."
(Gunnar Ekelöf)

"Je n'aime guère le mot influence, qui ne désigne qu'une ignorance ou une hypothèse."
(Paul Valéry)

The Problem of Influence: Ekelöf, Eliot and "le Démon de l'analogie"

The Concept of Influence and the Questionability of Influence Studies

The problem of literary influence has been one of the central concerns of comparative literature and of comparative literary studies since their conception in the 19th century. Thus Paul Van Tieghem can speak of "cette notion d'influence qui est au coeur même des études de littérature comparée. . . ." ²³¹ Just how closely the concept of influence, implying as it does notions of causality, is related to positivism and the scientific, philosophical and epistemological concerns of the 19th century is not something which need concern us here, but the awareness of the concept of influence as it is employed in modern usage, that is as the particular indebtedness of a particular writer to another insofar as his reading or study of his predecessor has affected organically his own creative process and possibly but not necessarily left residue of this state of having been affected in the form of specific formal or ideal aspects of his own work which are reminiscent of that of his predecessor, is undoubtedly a characteristically recent development in Western man's view of the literary process and one which has to be related to the modern, post-Romantic obsession with "originality," for as Ronald Primeau has written:

As long as originality was not the primary criterion of aesthetic value, the pervasive linearity of literary influence was never a real threat to the imitator. Because classical imitation was a species of discipline for the purpose of liberation, the writer experienced little of the confinement that later came to be associated with staying too close to one's influences. ²³²

Ekelöf himself has expressed an awareness of the inhibiting, limiting effect which the post-Romantic preoccupation with "originality" has had on the artist when in a review of Erik Lindegren's Sviter (Suites) he gives a very positive evaluation of the latter's poetic practice and of his incorporation of the whole poetic tradition:

But I believe that it is in that direction that one has to look for the key to that form of poetry of which it is here a question. As a means of expression for experience it employs not only a personal language determined by influences and by its own formal endeavours; it wants to employ poetry as a whole, as a canon. This in its turn represents a revival of pre-romantic ideals or rather of pre-romantic practice. It was romanticism that à tout prix wanted to be itself. Before that one drew much more on common sources.²³³

Recent examinations of the concept of "influence" and of the philosophical, epistemological, psychological and methodological problems and difficulties which studies in influence pose have, if nothing else, revealed the inescapable complexity of all attempts to verify if an influence has actually occurred. A real influence may be the result of contact with apparently secondary works of art rather than with those of the undisputed masters. The influence may have exerted itself largely on the--for the students of influence--shaky ground of the influenced artist's psyche and through a process of displacement left little or no verifiable traces; conversely, supposed textual similarities or overlappings between the works of two artists who are assumed to stand in a causal relationship with each other may be purely contingent coincidences or parallelisms, more the product of the "Zeitgeist" than of one artist's effect on another. The danger in the latter case is of course that the critic or scholar may attribute an influence where he should

have been content with his own private associations.

The moral problems of literary indebtedness are, at least in the modern context, just as obvious and difficult to avoid: if one writer has "influenced" another, the critic-scholar who establishes the influence willingly or unwillingly contributes to the belief that the later, influenced writer is in some sense less original or innovative, that he owes a debt to his usually more famous predecessor which he has to repay or acknowledge or in extreme cases that he is even guilty of having appropriated an artistic method, a particular style or technique for his own use without properly acknowledging the debt. Frequently, if the critic himself does not draw such explicit conclusions, his readers, steeped as they are in the post-Romantic concern for originality, may well draw such conclusions themselves merely on the basis of the critic's having established an analogy or similarity between the two artists in question. Göran Hermerén in his book Influence in Art and Literature, which is the first and only systematic study of the epistemological, logical and philosophical difficulties posed by studies of influence, has stressed the dangers coupled with such a moralistic view of influence:

The moral of this [Shakespeare's borrowings from previous writers] is that one should have a less moralistic view of influence; it need not be a fault or a sign of weakness to be influenced by others; and this, in turn, would be to challenge the basically Romantic conception of originality as the supreme value in art.²³⁴

Given the often vague application of the term, it seems advisable to reserve the concept of "influence" for those particular modifications which the work of one particular writer or artist has undergone due to his having had contact with the work of a previous writer or artist. Influence in the

sense of literary fortune or of the reception of a particular writer in say a foreign country, for example the reception of T. S. Eliot in the Sweden of the 30's and 40's, poses problems which are of a more generally sociological or historical nature and thus belongs, strictly speaking, more to the domain of literary history or even the sociology of literature than to that of literary criticism in the narrow sense of the term, of which influence studies may be considered to be a subordinate category, although obviously the positive reception of a given writer in a given milieu and at a given time may have been conducive to that effect which one calls "influence" in the strict sense, i.e. the effect both artistic and psychological of the work of one writer-artist on another. It is equally possible, however, that such a positive reception insofar as it created a common ground of association among a certain group of readers and critics may have encouraged the advancement of false claims of influence with respect to that particular writer who was in the limelight and a lesser known indigenous writer. This could well have been the case with T. S. Eliot and Gunnar Ekelöf during the 30's and 40's when the question of influence was first brought up.

In accordance with Hermerén's exposition of the problems of influence, it is perhaps necessary to make a distinction between artistic and non-artistic influence and between psychological and artistic-literary influence. A non-artistic influence would be of the type "Ekelöf's travels in Greece, Italy and Turkey"; an artistic one on the other hand his studies of Sufic literature (Ibn al- 'Arabī for example). As far as the distinction between artistic and psychological influence is concerned, any artistic influence necessarily implies that a psychological influence has taken place, whereas the converse is not necessarily true: a strong psychological influence on an artist may have left little or no visible trace, no visible influ-

ence on the technical-artistic aspects of his work. Further, one can distinguish between the external conditions for determining whether an influence has taken place and the internal conditions for the same. The external conditions include such conditions as the "temporal requirement" (Hermerén) (X cannot have influenced Y unless Y follows X) and the "requirement of contact" (Hermerén) (X cannot have influenced Y with respect to a particular artistic aspect unless Y was familiar with X with respect to a). The external conditions for influence thus reflect the history of the influenced writer's-artist's contact with a previous writer or artist and the scholar or student of influence in his attempt to determine whether or not such conditions have been fulfilled can content himself at this level with questions of chronology ("Did the first draft of poem Y created by poet B come into existence before he made the acquaintance of poem X by poet A?").

The internal requirements or conditions of influence, on the other hand, refer to those particular formal, technical or artistic similarities between two literary or artistic works, similarities which seem to substantiate the fact that one of the two works in question has been influenced by the other: for example, the use of the quotation-allusion technique in Ekelöf's En Mölna-Elegi may be taken as proof of the fact that the poem has been influenced in this respect by T. S. Eliot's use of a similar technique in The Waste Land. In this context it is, however, important to distinguish between significant or relevant similarities and irrelevant ones. The former speak in favour of the attribution of influence, providing any reader under "normal" conditions would become aware of them; irrelevant or insignificant similarities are those which result from the fact that two writers participate in the same artistic convention, use the same source or work in the same medium. The relevant similarities, on the contrary, are sufficiently

precise, that is tell one enough about the artistic specificity or individuality of the two works considered to function as an index of possible influence. That both Ekelöf and Eliot have written long poems in free verse or that both make use of an allusion-quotation technique are not in themselves sufficiently precise similarities to be used as the basis of claims of influence, since innumerable other modern poets such as Pound have also used the same techniques. Only the internal conditions for influence, that is the domain of relevant artistic similarities, place the critic in the domain of literary criticism strictly speaking, whose main task is the "description, analysis and interpretation of works of art"²³⁵; the study of the external conditions belongs more to the area of literary history.

The greatest mistake of those critics attempting to establish the influence of one writer on another is to attribute an influence where there is a mere temporal succession and nonexclusive similarities. As Hermerén and other theoreticians of influence have pointed out, however, "there can be influence without similarity and similarity without influence."²³⁶ Understanding ex nihilo seems indeed to be a human impossibility; it seems as if we can only understand a thing in terms of what we have already encountered, in terms of our previous experience with things. To grasp what Joyce in Ulysses calls the "whatness" of a thing, in other words what gives it its individuality and makes it entirely distinct from other things, is reserved for those exclusive moments of epiphany where one is able to set aside all teleological thinking, all subordination of one's thought and perception to one's will. It is perhaps something of the latter "disinterested" grasp of things which Rilke has achieved--or at least attempted to achieve--in the Neue Gedichte. Understanding is usually identified, however, with the uncovering of identical structures or similarities. Thus Hans Ruin can

speak of "what an enormous role the search for analogies, identical structures, similar situations and contexts plays in all areas of culture" (vilken enorm roll uppletandet av motsvarigheter, identiska strukturer, liknande situationer och sammanhang spelar inom alla kulturgebit) and can conclude: "There exists a need to tie together, grow together, generalize which makes itself felt everywhere." (Det ges ett behov att binda samman, växa ihop, förallmänliga, som allestädes gör sig gällande.)²³⁷ In an interesting commentary in his Cahier I, Ekelöf himself has pointed to the impossibility of perceiving things ex nihilo:

but if you see the sun shining, you immediately feel joy and delight. That is indeed true but if you were to imagine a newly created human being old enough to have complete command of his senses but entirely without experience. He certainly would not feel any joy at the fact that the sun was shining the first time he saw it [.] Why? Because there is no sensory impression which gives you a feeling if you haven't previously experienced it. If you see a thing which does not resemble anything else, which does not remind you of anything you have seen previously, neither with respect to its form, colour, smell or taste, what kind of feelings would you feel if you saw it. Nothing if not perhaps a feeling of surprise at not feeling anything, at your emotional experience not telling you: "Here you have this thing and that thing, that is beautiful, that is ugly, that is dangerous etc. etc. [""] But if that thing stung you or burned you, you would certainly never again see it without a feeling of fear.²³⁸

In his book Literature as System Claudio Guillén makes an interesting distinction between two modes of critical apprehension. The first he calls "assimilation," the second "accommodation." "Assimilation," he writes, "takes place whenever the individual incorporates the data of experience into a previous logical framework."²³⁹ He writes further of this "assimila-

tive" mode of thought: "Most critics (or writers functioning as critics) view a new work 'through' a system: they perceive, judge and decide, for better or for worse, within the coordinates of an available critical scheme."²⁴⁰ In a note he further defines the distinction between "assimilation" and "accommodation": "Assimilation alone brings no effective knowledge of the subject and is countered constantly by accommodation, through which the subject actively participates in the refinement of cognitive schemes."²⁴¹ The great majority of influence studies, not even to speak of the more offhand statements about influence, would thus, it would seem, operate well within the sphere of "assimilation" and only marginally and in the best of cases can one label them as examples of "accommodation" in Guillén's sense, that is as significant contributions to a refinement of our understanding of a particular writer or a particular artist on his own terms. From a general point of view this is indeed the predicament of most academic literary criticism, that, to use Roland Barthes' term, it is fundamentally "analogical" rather than accommodative or productive. In a criticism of the "influence" mania of academic criticism in a commentary dated 1963, Ekelöf uses the similar terms "receptive" and "productive" (corresponding to Guillén's "assimilative" and "accommodative" respectively) to define the limitations of scholars obsessed by problems of influence and similarity:

For professors the following seems to be the case: their associations are receptive, not productive (as writers believe theirs are, in doing which many are wrong and some are right). They (the professors and those who will become such) sit and read and say to themselves: well I'll be damned! That I recognize from this or that French, English, German proto-type, or: well I'll be damned! That person has read about the Oedipus complex or Yin and Yang. If they went out into life instead, the problem of influence would not appear any more curious than that my stepfather

Smith made things hard for me or than that my mother Jones and her lover Murray caused me to be torn between principles.²⁴²

A further reservation to be held against the concept of influence and against studies in influence has to do with the larger problem of causality: mere temporal succession is of course no indication or proof of a causal relationship existing between two elements involved in the succession, just as little as the uncovering of a supposed causal relationship does not necessarily provide the key to the inner workings of either the thing "caused" or the thing which "causes." Yet such false assumptions in all their banality seem to be operative in many a critic's concern with influence. It is perhaps Friedrich Nietzsche who has provided the most thorough modern critique of the entire notion of causality, of the illusion of causality of which the notion of "influence" may be viewed as a subdivision. He writes, for example: "-Aus einer notwendigen Reihenfolge von Zuständen folgt nicht deren Kausal-Verhältnis: . . . Es gibt weder Ursachen, noch Wirkungen."²⁴³ In another passage he writes:

Es gibt nicht, wie Kant meint, einen Kausalitäts-Sinn. Man wundert sich, man ist beunruhigt, man will etwas Bekanntes, woran man sich halten kann. . . . Sobald im Neuen uns etwas Altes aufgezeichnet wird, sind wir beruhigt. Der angebliche Kausalitäts-Instinkt ist nur die Furcht vor dem Ungewohnten und der Versuch, in ihm etwas Bekanntes zu entdecken, --ein Suchen nicht nach Ursachen, sondern nach Bekanntem.²⁴⁴

At the same time supposed causality does not necessarily provide knowledge of the things involved in the causal chain: "Aus seinen Ursachen lässt sich ein Ding nicht erraten, d.h. ein Ding=seinen Wirkungen. Die Kenntnis der Ursachen eines Dinges gibt keine Kenntnis seiner Wirkungen, d.h. keine Kenntnis des Dinges."²⁴⁵ In a sense the establishment of causality in many

cases--and influence studies are a good example--can from the point of view of understanding the inner workings of the elements in the causal chain be a mere tautology comparable to the mediaeval concept of the "virtue" (the reason why a particular drug or plant has a purgative effect is that it possesses "la vertu purgative"). The late 19th century scepticism towards the idea of causality affected the Nietzsche disciple Hermann Hesse, who in the opening passage from his short travel journal Die Nürnberger Reise (1927) can conclude:

Gründe, so scheint mir, sind immer unklar, Kausalität findet im Leben nirgends statt, nur im Denken. Der vollkommen vergeistigte, der Natur ganz und gar entwachsene Mensch zwar müsste fähig sein, in seinem Leben eine lückenlose Kausalität zu erkennen, und wäre berechtigt, die seinem Bewusstsein zugänglichen Ursachen und Antriebe für die einzigen zu halten, denn er bestünde ja ganz und gar nur aus Bewusstsein. Doch habe ich einen solchen Menschen oder einen solchen Gott noch niemals angetroffen, und bei uns anderem Menschen erlaube ich mir, gegen alle Begründungen eines Tuns oder Geschehens skeptisch zu sein.²⁴⁶

Yet another reservation has to be held against the notion of literary influence and this is that it tends to ignore the transcendent element which characterizes any great artist, his ability to transcend or surpass the material conditions of his environment, including his influences, and to reinterpret the borrowings from his predecessors on his own terms. In his important essay "The Aesthetics of Literary Influence," Claudio Guillén has warned against the extremes of viewing the creative process either as a mere mechanical transposition of values already present, let us say in the form of a particular artistic tradition or of a set of conventions, or as a completely transcendent act of creation; neither of these extreme schemes provides an adequate representation of the creative act as it is practiced by

the gifted artist:

Artistic creation, according to this view, may be found somewhere between two poles: the process of transfer and reorganization mentioned above; and on the other end, the religious concept of absolute creation. Both notions are incompatible with the peculiar nature of art. The former appears to be based on an unsatisfactory biological analogy. . . . Creation is a term particularly adaptable to art insofar as one excludes from it both the extreme of creatio ex nihilo and the supposition that the creative process represents a passage from one thing to another within the same order of reality (the same "unity," that is to say) without a contrast, an effort, and a change of kind.²⁴⁷

Guillén's concept of displacement has an obvious applicability to the problems of literary influence, which has to be seen not as a mechanical transfer of elements from the writer who influences to the writer who is influenced (an unwritten assumption which appears to underlie many a study of influence), but rather as a psychological effect on the genetic process which brings about the new work of the influenced writer, a psychological impulse of which the critic or scholar may well uncover no textual traces whatsoever in the new work, and this by virtue of the process of displacement through which the influenced writer assimilates, transforms and overcomes the original "genetic incitation" (Guillén). Needless to say the process of displacement becomes even more extreme, to the extent of becoming virtually unanalyzable from the scholar's point of view, when the influencing artist and the influenced artist are working in two distinct artistic media, for example the film and the literary text. The difficulties connected with establishing the contours of an influence across the lines of different media, say from painting to literature, are for the critic or scholar virtually insurmountable and the critics who have studied the influences on Eke-

lðf may thus be excused somewhat for not having delved into some of the non-literary influences which the Swede underwent, in particular such things as the modern art of the 20's in Paris and the music of Stravinsky (both influences which Ekelðf mentions as having been significant impulses behind his early work in the essay "Sjðlvsyn"[Personal Observation]); the fact remains, however, that this negligence is more convenient than justifiable, for as Ekelðf has written:

It is a complete and deplorable misconception that only literature, or mainly literature, can influence literature. One can say that this is an unintelligent misconception. A poet can learn so-called strictness of form in music, if anywhere, and why not in architecture, at least certain kinds of architecture. What he can learn from painting is completely incalculable, for painting is itself a schooling in how one perceives, sees life and the phenomena which surround one.²⁴⁸

According to Guillén the "fallacy of similarity" whereby the positivist critic uncovers parallelisms, echoes or textual similarities between a work Y created by B and a work X created by B's predecessor A and thus infers an influence of A on B is an exemplification of the falsity of the mechanistic concept of transfer which most critics have inherited from the 19th century. For unless such echoes, parallelisms and textual similarities, which often reside more in the private associations of the critic than in the artistic horizon of either of the two artists involved, can be shown to have had a decisive effect on the genetic process resulting in work Y--and the difficulties involved in determining this are frequently insurmountable--, they can hardly be put forward as proofs of influence.

Despite all the above reservations which would seem to restrict the value or feasibility of influence studies in art and literature, the fact

remains that the latter continue to flourish and that critics, even prominent ones, continue to make an often unreflected use of the concept of influence in the belief that it somehow allows the student of literature and art to penetrate the functioning of the creative process. The greatest danger facing academic criticism is what I have called the "fallacy of similarity," whereby supposed similarities of technique, versification, themes and the like are advanced, together with more or less convincing proof of an influenced writer having had contact in one form or another with a previous influencing writer, as proofs of claims of influence. Where there are mere homologies at work, analogies are drawn and from these analogies an historical-causal dependence of one writer on another. The establishment and substantiation of claims of influence is, however, not only a formal problem: it is also, as we have seen, a psychological one as well as an historical one. An awareness of the historical situation in which the two writers function for whom an hypothesis of influence is to be examined is an absolute necessity for the scholar who wishes to avoid the pitfall of attributing "influence" where one is dealing merely with the contact of two writers with a similar convention (say the use of the collage or mosaic of quotations in modern poetry from Pound and Eliot to William Carlos Williams and Gunnar Ekelöf), tradition or historical situation. In the latter case obviously one has to do not with influence but rather with what Ekelöf in an unpublished commentary on the problem of influence has called "parallel phenomena, owing to a similar situation, preconditions and other things" (parallellföreteelser, beroende på liknande situation, förutsättningar eller annat).²⁴⁹ The danger is of course heightened in the case of academic criticism with its largely analogical and assimilative bias. The critic or scholar who is cautious and aware of the difficulty of proving claims of influence refrains altogether from drawing conclusions as to influence on the basis of

mere similarities or homologies; a case in point is Conradin Perner, who in his doctoral dissertation Gunnar Ekelöfs Nacht am Horizont und seine Begegnung mit Stéphane Mallarmé, after having drawn all kinds of parallels between Ekelöf's early work and the work of Mallarmé, cautiously refuses to commit himself to conclusions about influence and chooses to satisfy himself with a synchronic rather than diachronic treatment of the relationship between the two authors, concluding: "Dabei soll die Frage nach einem möglichen Einfluss von Mallarmé auf Ekelöf beiseite gelassen werden, ihre Beantwortung scheint uns nebensächlich und würde uns sicher nicht weiterführen, könnte uns im Gegenteil in höchst zweifelhafte, unsichere Fahrwasser lenken."²⁵⁰

The Färjesång-Four Quartets Debate

The history of Gunnar Ekelöf's much disputed "Eliot-beroende" (Eliot dependency or indebtedness) in Swedish academic and critical circles provides one with an ideal case history and reveals some of the dangers and limitations connected with claims of "influence" in literature. The subject of the Nobel Prize winner Eliot's supposed influence on the--at least on the international level--relatively obscure Ekelöf has aroused considerable debate in Sweden, a debate which ranges from Anders Osterling's first very cautious intimation of a possible connection between the two writers in his 1932 review of Sent på jorden in the Svenska Dagbladet to Kjell Espmark's important defence of Ekelöf's originality in an article in Bonniers Litterära Magasin of 1959 entitled "Ekelöf och Eliot" (Ekelöf and Eliot), an article for which Ekelöf personally thanked the author-critic in a subsequent letter to the editor of the same year, to a more recent claim that despite all protests to the contrary Ekelöf may have nonetheless been influenced significantly

by Eliot in Karl Erik Lagerlöf's review of Marie Louise Rammefalk's published doctoral dissertation Tre lärödiktare. Studier i Harry Martinsons, Gunnar Ekelöfs och Karl Vennbergs lyrik (Three Didactic Poets. Studies in the Poetry of Harry Martinson, Gunnar Ekelöf and Karl Vennberg). Outside of Ekelöf's important defence of his own artistic integrity and originality against the charge of being an Eliot apprentice in the essay "Självsyn" in Blandade kont, there are numerous lengthy unpublished commentaries in Ekelöf's own hand among the papers in the Gunnar Ekelöf collection, Uppsala University Library (capsule 'K' 'Kommentarer'), dealing with the concept of influence and influence studies, that is with Ekelöf's own highly critical attitude towards this particular critical nexus, and with his own personal and artistic relationship with T. S. Eliot. The history of Ekelöf's Eliot indebtedness has, of course, to be examined both from the perspective of Swedish critical debate and commentary on the subject (the external aspect of the problem) and from the viewpoint of the Swedish poet's contacts with and reception of the writings and personality of Eliot (the internal aspect).

What is remarkable about the claims of Swedish critics to the effect that Ekelöf was influenced by the great Anglo-American poet Eliot is their frequent vagueness, cautiousness and noncommittal quality, all of which qualities seem to point at one and the same time to a lack of methodological clarity and to an unconfessed, intuitive and latent awareness of what Hermén calls the "normative implications" of claims of influence, namely of what Guillén summarizes in the statement: "To ascertain an influence is to make a value judgment, not to measure a fact."²⁵¹ The first claims of this influence arose, as is well-known, in connection with the publication of Ekelöf's Färjesång in 1941, which was held to have been significantly influenced by Eliot's Four Quartets, portions of which Ekelöf was engaged in translating during the period in which the former poetry collection came into being. It was chiefly the abstract, intellectual style of both poetry collections

which was taken to be an index of influence; this denuded, depersonalized and intellectual-analytical style with its apparent lack of traditional "lyrical" effects was held to be something typically Eliotian and at the time a surprisingly "new" feature in Ekelöf's style following upon the lyrical, Rimaldian effusions and debaucheries of the 30's which Ekelöf was later to disavow and humourously maintain that they should be embroidered on cushions for old ladies, since he had no intention of allowing them to be reprinted.

Both Espmark in his subtly reasoned BLM article of 1959 and Ekelöf himself in an unpublished commentary have emphasized the fact that once one critic had, however cautiously, established the claim of influence with respect to Eliot and Ekelöf and had "set the ball rolling" so to speak, subsequent critics, following in the footsteps of their predecessor(s), felt more secure in putting forward similar claims and had only refer to a previous authority: "It is interesting to study the shift in interpretation which later followed. With each repetition one grew more confident of one's assertions." (Det är intressant att studera den glidning i uppfattningen, som senare följde. För varje gång påståendena upprepades, blev man säkrare på sin sak.)²⁵² In Ekelöf's own formulation this phenomenon of one critic's parroting of another is described thus:

Eliot: the assertion has been repeated incessantly, most often I suppose taken over from other previous critics, as though by means of such a repetition one wanted to avoid having to give positive proof. Thus when later critics wanted to lend authority to and indicate the source of the claim, they could simply refer to this or that earlier good name. Rumours about a ghost can also survive by reference to a reliable person,²⁵³

A good example of such an unreflected taking over of a previous critic's

claim comes from the otherwise perceptive Carl Fehrman, who writes in 1957:

In Ferry Song Ekelöf's poetry has taken on an analytical, often abstract, intellectualistic tone. For the style in these reflective poems he has undoubtedly gained an impulse from Eliot's later poetry, which he also translated during the years after 1940. The observation was made already by Erik Lindegren in his well-informed and well-argued Ekelöf essay in Time [Tiden: Swedish journal].²⁵⁴

In the Lindegren essay to which Fehrman refers to substantiate his own strong claim of influence ("undoubtedly"), Lindegren had written of Ekelöf's Färjesång, pointing to its more barren, prosaic and abstract style in contrast to the "Nordic-romantic" poetry collections of the 30's such as Dedikation:

Ferry Song is marked entirely by the struggle of one "who wants a meaning"; it is to a large extent a wrestling with problems, a radical coming-to-terms with one's self, at once more objective and abstract than his previous poetry; one inevitably comes to think of the later Eliot. But the problems are entirely Ekelöf's own. . . .²⁵⁵

There is a possible reference to Lindegren's phrasing of a claim of influence in the following commentary of Ekelöf on the topic of influence:

If in reading me for example, one "comes to think of" for example Eliot's diction and his hidden or undisguised quotes, this is then at once an "influence." In reality it is the reader's association. For if he had looked carefully, given himself the trouble of distinguishing the content and import, then he couldn't very well have come to think of Eliot--other than par contraste, as an antipode.

Thus it happens under the sign of indolence. That which presented itself as an association to the reader is often imputed to the writer as an influence, while in reality it is a question of the reader's welcoming those comparisons which the nature and

level of his reading experience offer him. On the basis of that to draw any conclusions whatsoever as to the correspondences between my reading experience and his is, to say the least, rash.²⁵⁶

Lindegren's formulation of the relationship Eliot-Ekelöf is on the whole, however, still cautious: there is an admission of the fact that the association of Ekelöf with Eliot, of the abstract style of Färjesång with that of Eliot's Four Quartets may lie more in the personal associations of the critic than in the category of those impulses which have influenced the writer ("one inevitably comes to think of"). Needless to say the association of the "abstract style" of Färjesång with that of Four Quartets in itself furnishes precious little proof of the causal relationship known as influence; it is a mere textual similarity and the critic's conclusions are all too impressionistic, take too little account of the specificity of the works in question to be a valid basis for claims of influence. Further, Espmark in his BLM essay of 1959 pointed out that the so-called "abstract style" of Färjesång is far from being something new in Ekelöf's production and can be followed all the way back to Sent på jorden and its naked intellectualism and concern for epistemological questions, a concern which becomes most obvious to the reader of Ekelöf's Cahier I from the same period. There is perhaps greater intellectual honesty involved in admitting that one's personal reader associations are precisely that rather than attempting to pass them off as general reactions of the "normal" reader or trying to found claims of influence on the basis of them. As example of the first alternative is Knut Jaensson, who in an interesting letter passage associates Ekelöf's ability to "prose poetry" with that of Eliot, without drawing or scarcely intimating any conclusions as to influence:

Your last poem in BIM was exceptionally fine. Every but interesting and as always composed with great taste. I came to think of Baudelaire--that skald whom I've long thought you are the most related with--and remembered his special aesthetic finesse: to prose poetry. Eliot has had the same idea, namely that the purest poetry, true poetry, should have an element of prose, which of course means nothing else but that it should lack hollow phrases. Already Tegnér--to speak in review style--recommended putting a piece of "granite" into poetry.²⁵⁷

Bengt Holmqvist, who on the contrary in his 1947 article on Ekelöf in Nya Argus (The New Argus) is out on the errand of demonstrating Ekelöf's indebtedness to Eliot, is far more categorical in his discussion of this aspect of the poetry of Ekelöf and Eliot: "In reality Gunnar Ekelöf in Ferry Song has realized as far as is at all possible the Eliotian idea of an 'unpoetical poetry.'" (I själva verket har Gunnar Ekelöf i 'Färjesång' så långt det överhuvudtaget är möjligt förverkligat den eliotska idén om en 'opoetisk poesi'.)²⁵⁸

One of the first major critics to point to an influence of Eliot on Ekelöf's Färjesång was the poet and critic Artur Lundkvist in his 1941 BIM review of the poem. After having stressed the new tone which characterizes Färjesång when it is compared with Ekelöf's earlier poetry collections, i.e. its more analytical than purely lyrical quality, Lundkvist concludes that there can be little doubt ("almost certain") that in significant respects Eliot was an important influence on Ekelöf:

Hence it is almost certain that Ekelöf's present master has to be Eliot, the later Eliot from and including Ash-Wednesday. Something in the psychological situation of the two poets seems similar: the self-ransacking resignation, the agonizing lack of belief, the stubborn search for truth which with masterful lyrical

technique transforms confession into poetic profession. Even the technique, the versification and the mode of expression itself remind one frequently of Eliot: the sententiously incisive, the paradoxically antithetical, the almost ritualistic retakes and suggestive repetitions, somewhat marked by automatism and at the same time treacherously nuanced. (Not even the Greek quotation is lacking.) But it is nonetheless not primarily a question of dependence but rather of emancipation: Eliot has helped him with emancipation and it is an emancipation from intentions and configurations which Ekelöf did not feel to be entirely his own. The result has been a strictly distilled, intellectual poetry which with its saline taste and its crystalline consistency makes a great deal of other poetry appear formal and conventional.²⁵⁹

With all due consideration for the demands of a literary review, demands which most often lead to a more rhetorical than analytical exposition of impressions, a close examination of Lundkvist's evidence for his strong claim of influence reveals that his detailed account of the various aspects of a possible influence is largely impressionistic and not necessarily borne out by the facts. As far as Lundkvist's emphasis on Ekelöf's acquaintance with the works of Eliot beginning with Ash-Wednesday (1930) is concerned, there are indications that Ekelöf's knowledge of this and the subsequent work of Eliot at least during the period of conception of Färjesång was, if not nonexistent, at least marginal. There is of course the possibility that he had become acquainted with Ash-Wednesday through Erik Lindegren's translation of the poem, which appeared in the journal Presens (The Present) in 1938.²⁶⁰ On the other hand in an unpublished though retrospective "influence" commentary, Ekelöf has indicated roughly the Eliot edition which formed the basis of his Eliot studies:

Now and then during the 30's [40's?: Ingrid Ekelöf's marginal note] I of course read Eliot, that which I had, which stopped

before Ash-Wednesday. I read it then in a nostalgic mood, partially with the old world which was then coming to an end in mind, partially, as said before, out of sympathy for England during the blitz.²⁶¹

The most obviously impressionistic aspect of Lundkvist's review and of the exposition of the similarities which he sees as proof of influence is his insistence on such vague "existentialist" qualities as resignation and lack of belief, but even his remarks on the technical aspects of Ekelöf's and Eliot's work give only the illusion of being precise and well-founded: the "paradoxically antithetical" or the movement beyond rigid dualities runs all the way through Ekelöf's production and can hardly be seen as a product of the influence of Eliot; the use of such "musical" forms as repetition is characteristic of the poet's earliest collection Sent på jorden, which in addition gives the effect of being marked by a kind of hypnotic automatism, an automatism which I think Lundkvist mistakenly qualifies as something "typically Eliotian." Although I can find no example of Ekelöf's use of the Greek quotation prior to Färjesång, Latin quotations mark even his earliest poetry collections and a Latin quote opens Sent på jorden: "sequor imperium, magne Cupido, tuum." Our conclusion is that none of Lundkvist's statements can be seen as substantial and precise enough proof to warrant the belief that Ekelöf in Färjesång was significantly influenced by T. S. Eliot.

The obstinacy with which subsequent critics continued to assume, imply or openly conclude an influence of Eliot's Four Quartets on Ekelöf's Färjesång once the first groundwork of such an hypothesis was laid is indeed remarkable and provides a good but extremely damaging example of the largely "assimilative" or "receptive" character of traditional literary criticism and literary histories. As early as 1944 the "spectre" of Eliot's supposed influence on Ekelöf's composition of Färjesång was so well-established that

an academic critic such as Richard Steffen could write in his Svensk litteraturhistoria för den högre elementarundervisningen (Swedish Literary History for Higher Elementary Education): "In his latest collection Ferry Song (1941) he [Ekelöf] is clearly influenced by the English modernist, the paradoxical and ironic Catholic T. S. Eliot, whom he has also translated into Swedish." (I sin senaste samling Färjesång (1941) är han tydligt påverkad av den engelske modernisten, den paradoxale och ironiske katoliken T. S. Eliot, som han också tolkat på svenska.)²⁶² Even a summary examination of some of the comments on Färjesång in literary histories and the like shows that the appearance of the name of Eliot in that connection is almost a given. As late as 1966 Erik Hjalmar Linder in the fourth edition of his Ny illustrerad svensk litteraturhistoria (New Illustrated Swedish Literary History), repeating Lindegren's and Fehrman's belief in an influence of Eliot's "analyslyrik" (analytical poetry) Four Quartets on the style, tone and even content of Färjesång, writes of the latter poetry collection:

The poetry now attempts to be clear, dry, truth-searching, intellectually analytical; it attempts to show the falsity and coarseness of our ordinary judgments of reality. It appears to be T. S. Eliot's analytical poetry and nihilism which capture Ekelöf, at the same time that younger poets also begin to cultivate the same style; but Ekelöf claims to have read Eliot only afterwards.²⁶³

Once again one has to conclude that such impressionistic statements of comparison as Linder engages in can scarcely be used as adequate proofs of an influence. His reference to Eliot's supposed nihilism ("intighetskänsla"), not even to mention the fact that, as Cleanth Brooks in an essay on The Waste Land points out, Eliot denied ever having conceived the early poetry with such nihilistic intentions as critics have often imputed to him, is hardly specific enough, for the reference to the term has become almost a

complete cliché with respect to the modern period and cannot be seen as any more applicable to Eliot than to numerous other writers such as Céline, Sartre, Camus or Benn.

The examples which can be given of the "ghost" of Eliot's influence on Ekelöf are legion and supply a depressing exemplification of one critic's unreflected adaptation of previous critics' claims of influence. It is of course above all the literary histories, having been written as they usually are with considerable time limitations and to meet the demands of an editor and of a more or less uninitiated reading public, that are guilty of a more assimilative than accommodative examination and exposition of the facts. Joris Taels' entry on Gunnar Ekelöf in the Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century thus reads as a mere repetition of previous critics' unexamined claims of an influence of Eliot on the analytical style of Färjesång: "In Färjesång (1941) he [Ekelöf] broke with his earlier surrealism and also with his nature romanticism rooted in reality, coming nearer to the intellectual, analytical poetry of Eliot."²⁶⁴ This time the academic critic draws no definite conclusions as to the possible influence of Eliot on Ekelöf but one can rest assured that the mere drawing of the analogy will be sufficient to label Ekelöf as an Eliot epigone once and for all in the eyes of the average Anglo-Saxon reader. A further example of the workings of "le démon de l'analogie" (to use Roland Barthes' term as applied to analogical, academic criticism and drawn from the title of a prose poem by Mallarmé) is the following statement in Hjalmar Alving's-Gudmar Hasselberg's Svensk litteraturhistoria (Swedish Literary History) concerning Färjesång: "Ekelöf's analytical style reminds one of Eliot's Four Quartets." (Ekelöf's analyserande stil erinrar om Eliots Four Quartets.)²⁶⁵ Here the comparison Eliot-Ekelöf is couched in even more cautious terms than in the previous statement by Taels and is represented, more or less explicitly, as being the personal

association of the critic ("reminds one"), but the observer familiar with the entire history of the debate regarding the influence of Eliot on Ekelöf has no trouble in observing the same process of assimilation at work as in all the previous "critical" statements. The same observation can be made with respect to the relatively recent statement by Sven Hakon Rossel in his literary history Skandinavische Literatur 1870-1970: "'Färjesång' (Fährenlied, 1941) bezeichnet eine neue Phase. Man kann auf die Verbindung zur frühen orientalischen Dichtung und Philosophie, zur indischen Musik hinweisen, aber auch T. S. Eliot hat von dieser Phase an viel für Ekelöfs Stil bedeutet."²⁶⁶

A final example may serve to complete this listing of the critical claims of an influence of Eliot on Ekelöf with respect to Färjesång. It is taken from Alrik Gustafson's A History of Swedish Literature (1961). Gustafson is rather definite about the influence of Eliot on Ekelöf and even goes so far as to claim that Ekelöf was guilty of a kind of "mauvaise foi" in that he "learned from T. S. Eliot and others more than he is willing to admit."²⁶⁷ Once again it is the analytical emphasis or tone of Färjesång which reminds the critic of T. S. Eliot and is taken as an index of influence; Gustafson does not mention Ekelöf's 1941 collection in the following passage but elsewhere in the entry on Ekelöf he refers to the "severe analytical intellectualism of the poems in Färjesång":²⁶⁸

In general, however, one can discern in his poetry a gradual shift away from the amorphous surrealist drift of image and symbol characteristic of his early verse toward the more disciplined form and spare intellectualism (partly influenced by T. S. Eliot) of his poetic maturity. He rendered into Swedish as early as 1941 Eliot's "East Coker" from the Four Quartets.²⁶⁹

Espmark in his BLM essay of 1959 has emphasized the importance of an historical reconstruction of Ekelöf's contact with Four Quartets during the

period of Färjesång's conception, a contact which can have included both reading and translation. This is obviously the most basic level of the interference phenomenon which goes under the name of "influence" but a study of this aspect is nonetheless essential and unavoidable, for without contact there can be no influence. The fact that Ekelöf translated some of Four Quartets (East Coker in its entirety, sections of Little Gidding and The Dry Salvages) has of course been used as one of the most substantial proofs of an influence having taken place by such critics as Bengt Holmqvist, Carl Fehrman, Richard Steffen and Alrik Gustafson. Espmark writes in this connection:

Ekelöf's translation work has doubtless constituted one of the strongest pieces of evidence in the influence affair. The translation of East Coker was published in BIM only a few months before Ferry Song appeared and it has undoubtedly contributed to creating preconceived ideas. One encounters an example of the fact that a certain significance has indeed been attributed in this context to the translation work in the case of Bengt Holmqvist in his Ekelöf essay in The New Argus 1947. Fehrman also seems to have the same opinion, when in Ferry Song's abstract, intellectual style he traces an influence "from Eliot's later poetry, which he (Ekelöf) translated during the years after 1940..." If one can show that the most essential poems in Ferry Song were written before Ekelöf began his work on East Coker, the matter assumes in part a new aspect.²⁷⁰

As far as Ekelöf's translation work having been put to his charge is concerned, once it was a question of the critics trying to substantiate their claims of influence, one can cite Ekelöf's own formulation: "I am also at a disadvantage by the fact that I translated Eliot." (Det ligger mig också i fatet att jag översatt Eliot.)²⁷¹

As a retrospective commentary on the problem of influence in a letter

off Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg shows, the former's reading of Four Quartets took place for the first time only once he had been sent some of the poems from Eliot's collection, the sending of which he took as an authorization or commission to translate:

During the years 38-40-41 I read Eliot, more out of sympathy for his retrospective disposition [Eliot's traditionalism] and for England during the blitz than out of real spiritual affinity, for his theologizing conservatism is entirely alien to me. I did not, however, read any of the Quartets until I got the commission to translate East Coker, of which a few copies had been flown here through the blockade in the legendary secret mosquito planes (isn't that what they were called, built out of wood and veneer). Espmark's exposition of the so-called influence affair in BIM of October 59 (do you have it? it is important) is for the most part correct. At the time I only had access to the Eliot of the poems in the first, smaller "collected" edition which goes up to the year? No essays.²⁷²

In another letter of the same year to Sjöberg, Ekelöf again emphasizes the fact that he did not translate Eliot until he was commissioned to do so by Bonniers during the Second World War: "I had never translated Eliot until a direct commission came during the war." (Jag har aldrig översatt Eliot förrän direkt beställning kom under kriget.)²⁷³

With all due regard for the possibility of certain inaccuracies resulting from the retrospective vantage point of Ekelöf in his "influence" commentaries as well as for a certain "anxiety of influence" (Harold Bloom) from Ekelöf's side, there is no reason whatsoever to question the validity of his claim not to have translated Eliot until commissioned to do so by Bonniers, nor is there reason to assume he had read Eliot's Four Quartets or even parts of it before his work on the translations in the spring.

of 1941. Eliot's Burnt Norton is the only one of the four Quartets which Ekelöf is likely to have read prior to Bonniers' request for a translation of East Coker. Burnt Norton had appeared in book form in the Collected Poems 1909-1935 as early as 1936.²⁷⁴ Yet there is no reason to assume Ekelöf's familiarity with this particular edition. A note for a "five-week plan for books" (fem-veckorsplan f. böcker) in Ekelöf's notebook N (1939-1940, perhaps even earlier) reads in fact: "Eliot's poems: new, more complete" (Eliots poems: ny, fullständigare). Further I have already cited Ekelöf's indication that the edition to which he had access during roughly the same period did not even include Ash-Wednesday (1930). Even if Ekelöf had been familiar with Burnt Norton, however, it is rather his presumed knowledge of East Coker which critics have placed on the balance against him when they have sought to "prove" his having been influenced by Eliot in Färjesång. As for East Coker, a separate and limited edition appeared in supplement form in The New English Weekly Easter Number of 1940; a second limited edition appeared in the same journal shortly before 13 June 1940. The first official Faber edition of this particular Quartet appeared on 12 September 1940.²⁷⁵ Due to the blockade of England by Nazi Germany, it is highly unlikely that Ekelöf could have been acquainted with even the latter edition, even more so since the number of copies printed was limited.

Following Espmark's reconstruction of the Ekelöf-BLM contacts on the subject of a translation of East Coker, it was on 22 April 1941 that the BLM editor Georg Svensson wrote to Ekelöf, who at the time was staying in Dorotea (Lappland), suggesting that he take upon himself the task of translating the poem. On the 25th of April the poem was sent to Ekelöf by BLM and on the 18th of May Ekelöf sent in his translation to that journal.²⁷⁶

Pursuing further Espmark's reconstruction of Ekelöf's life and work during

roughly the first half of 1941, it would be false to assume that Ekelöf's work on the translation of East Coker could have had any effect on the style or other aspects of Färjesång and that simply for reasons of chronology. In an enquiry "Eliots betydelse för mig" (Eliot's Significance for Me) in which several other Swedish poets participated and which was published in Röster i Radio (Voices in Radio) in 1948, Ekelöf stressed the fact that his first real penetration into the work of the Anglo-American poet took place as a result of his work on the translations of Eliot done for Bonniers in the early 40's: "But I can't say I ever penetrated deeper into his world until I myself began to translate." (Men jag kan inte säga att jag någonsin kom djupare in i hans värld förrän jag själv började översätta.)²⁷⁷

As Espmark has pointed out, the fact that Ekelöf translated East Coker during roughly the same period as when Färjesång was conceived cannot be given any particular weight as an index of the influence of Eliot on that collection for the simple reason that several significant poems in that collection had already been published separately in various journals prior to their emission in book form as part of Färjesång, a practice in which Ekelöf habitually engaged and which makes the establishment of the chronology of his production often difficult. Färjesång appeared in the bookshops on 25 September 1941 but "Tag och skriv" had already appeared in the March number of BIM of that same year.²⁷⁸ "Eufori" (Euphoria) had been published in BIM in 1939 and several other poems such as "Ecce Homo," "Melancholia," "O heliga död" (O Holy Death) and "Färjesång" had all been published in Ord och Bild well before Ekelöf's study of East Coker began.²⁷⁹

An important letter dated Dorotea 23 April 1941 from Ekelöf to Bonniers in response to the letter of 22 April from Bonniers to Ekelöf cited above indicates, if attention is given to its wording, that Ekelöf could have had

no prior knowledge of East Coker before he began his work on the translation of the poem; it is, if nothing else, a strong piece of evidence against the theory that Four Quartets could have been a decisive influence on Färjesång:

I shall gladly, very gladly undertake the translation to the extent that the poem is translatable. Since I have not seen it, it is you know to a certain degree buying a pig in a poke [my stress] and I have only ordinary dictionaries. But re possible variorum readings I can of course perhaps confer with you in proof. . . .

At last now after a dreadful amount of work my poetry collection is nearing its completion and turns out being divided into two: on the one hand thirty or so poems, on the other hand a longer Waste-Land poem which deals with time, identity and the pursuit of the past. I thought of trying possibly to have that published separately, since in a widely spaced layout it would fill a small booklet, in other words only a plaquette. . . .

I am waiting excitedly for Eliot!²⁸⁰

In a letter dated several days later (27 April 1941, that is only a few days after the request from Bonniers to take on the translation of East Coker) and addressed to Kaj Bonnier, Ekelöf wrote:

I am sending the poetry collection the day after tomorrow, only first I want to make a copy. So many new perspectives opened up in the course of the work. The material turned out being divided into two parts, on the one hand thirty or so poems, on the other hand a longer Waste-Land poem, which possibly could be published separately since in a widely spaced layout it would fill a small booklet. The latter is not yet quite finished. . . .²⁸¹

There can be no doubt that the "Waste Land" poem in question in none other than En Mölna-Elegi. The question as to which of his other poetry collections in statu nascendi Ekelöf is here referring is somewhat unclear,

but the question seems almost irrelevant in the light of the fact that Färjesång and Non serviam, the only poetry collections which could come into consideration at this point in Ekelöf's production, had, as already indicated, a roughly "simultaneous" genesis, as the following passage from a letter of 13 July 1941 from Gunnar Ekelöf to Gerard Bonnier makes evident:

I have to begin, however, by mentioning that this poem ["Samothrake"], like the two other enclosed fragments, is included in a new poetry collection which I am working on along with Ferry Song and which is more than half finished, so that I believe that I will be able to have it finished by spring. It will consist of a very long poem (approx. 30 to 40 quartos), A Mölna Elegy, in which I like Eliot in The Waste Land after the First World War attempt among other things to draw a line under the mood of the previous years and sum up. In addition it contains many other things of a more personal nature, divided among a number of related sections, which can each be read on its own. Besides the elegy the collection would contain--and finish with--a number of "Preludes," introductions to something new, of which "Samothrake" is one. It will be a number of war poems or rather poems of struggle.
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This particular letter of 13 July ends with the following remark indicative of Ekelöf's apparent practice of negotiating the publication of a new poetry collection with Kaj Bonnier, whereby a portion of the preliminary manuscript was turned over at the time of a first preliminary agreement between Bonniers and Ekelöf; the description of the contract process seems to fit perfectly the character of the two letters of 23 April and 27 April 1941 cited above:

Actually it is with Kaj that I am used to making the contracts for my poetry collections but I did not know whether he was not this summer too out in the archipelago [skärgård: Stockholm's archipelago] and I thus took the liberty of writing to you on the subject at the same time that I wrote regarding "Horizon"

With my other poetry collections: I have before done it in such a way that I submitted a small portion of them at the time of a preliminary agreement. The title of this poetry collection would tentatively be "A Mölna Elegy and 13 Preludes."

A further indication of the irrelevance of a distinction between Färjesång, Non serviam and En Mölna-Elegi at least as far as the two letters above and the question of influence are concerned--the letters being taken as more or less definite evidence of Ekelöf's in no way having been influenced in Färjesång by Eliot's Four Quartets for the simple reason that the "requirement of contact" (Hermerén) was not fulfilled--is given by a plan or "disposition" (already cited in Part I of this study) among the Mölna papers. It bears the heading "Färjesång" and reads as follows:

Group I:

I-IV, (The Drowned), (Totentanz), (The Idealists), Polyphemus, (The Ferns), Odes 1-2, (Anyone at all), Cripples, Iuri, (The Chopin Prelude), (Snowflakes).

Group II (transition) a) The Blade of Grass, Hecate (ev.↓), Moon-poem,

(Reading?) b) A Saga, (Perspectives), (Rimbaud), Gandhāramed, White Eagle, The Tempest, Daphnis I-III, (Bal des lits bls.), (Lorrain), Amor a. Psyche, Sung

Group III: Melancholia, White Night, (Nameless), Not People (?), In the

Metropolis (?),
Peace (?), Earth (?), The Unborn, Mölna Elegy (The one on
the terrace)

I I, II, III, IV, Snowflakes, Polyphemus, The Drowned, The Fallen, Iuri, Cripples, The Idealists, Odes, Anyone at all

But not for People?²⁸³

From this general plan it is possible to observe how closely the genesis of the three poetry collections is interrelated. "Cripples" and "In the Capital" must be related to two poems in the section "Examples" (Exempel) of

Färjesång. "Sung" and "Gandhāramed" are two of the "études" (etyder) of the same collection. The notation "Rimbaud" can, of course, refer to none other than the "variation" "I konventionernas skogar" (In the Conventions' Woods) of that collection; the latter poem is an almost word-for-word translation of certain parts of a section "Délires II" in Rimbaud's Une saison en enfer. "Polyphemus" must be a reference to the poem which begins "O holy death!" (O heliga död!), one of the sections of "Kategorier" (Categories) in Färjesång. "Lorrain," "The Idealists," and "The Chopin Prelude" on the other hand correspond to the poems "Claude Lorrain," "Till idealisterna" (To the Idealists) and "Jarrama" of the 1945 collection Non serviam. It thus seems highly likely that Ekelöf in the two letters of April 1941 could have been referring to just such a poetry collection as is indicated in this general plan and that in turn indicates that he sent in a significant if not entirely finished portion of Färjesång for Bonniers' assessment for the purposes of publication only a few days past the date when he was requested to take on the task of translating East Coker. Consequently even if the wording of the above-mentioned letters to Bonniers of 23 and 27 April were not enough to indicate his lack of familiarity with East Coker prior to work on the translation, the circumstances of his having sent in a large portion of a preliminary manuscript at such a time makes it exceedingly unlikely that Four Quartets or East Coker in particular could have had any influence on Färjesång.

Clarté and Ekelöf's First Contacts with Eliot's Work

The history of Ekelöf's contact with Eliot, if one is to believe an unpublished commentary "Ekelöf v. Eliot" in Ekelöf's hand, dates back to the

early 30's and the Clarté group centred around Erik Mesterton and Karin Boye and the literary journal Spektrum (Spectrum) in which Ekelöf was a contributor. Ekelöf describes this early contact with the work of Eliot via Mesterton and Boye in a retrospective review in terms designed to indicate his having been merely a "distracted" observer of the Boye-Mesterton group's Eliot enthusiasm:

In Paris in 1929-30 I heard of Eliot but had not read him. Then and in 1931 in Stockholm most of what was to become Late on Earth 1932, also LoE 1962, was conceived. In 1931 through Clarté I got to know Mesterton, who then (among other things) was involved in a period of Eliot studies. He showed me a number of things which aroused my astonishment mostly because of the value he attached to it (ex. "Eyes that first I saw in tears"). He expressed his great enthusiasm at for example "Prufröck" and dwelt a great deal and learnedly on details, for example "A pair of ragged claws," etc. That seemed to me to be a strange way of reading poetry with a microscope. In the discussions between Karin Boye and him re details in The Waste Land, discussions at which I happened to be present (there were many others), I can truthfully say that I was a distracted listener. Nor did I of course come into the picture.
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Another unpublished commentary in much the same tone also helps to illuminate the biographical background of Ekelöf's first contact with Eliot during the Spektrum period:

If one winds up the ends of the threads at hand, one would probably land at Osterling, who wrote about my very first book that I had landed far inside "the waste land" or the like. He in his turn presumed an influence because The Waste Land a few months before had appeared in Spektrum, in which journal he knew that I was involved etc. I only saw the translation at the make-up in which I participated as a layout man. How in the space of

these few months could anything have worn off on Late on Earth[?] Why of course, I knew Mesterton and Karin Boye and the poem had been available for a long time in English. They [Boye, Mesterton] did not particularly consult me the unknown quantity in their work. I was not particularly interested in Eliot and found their discussions back and forth of the minutest detail a bit precious. And besides! Once again the same question: what is there of E [Eliot] in Late on Earth[?] Nulla! Not even a typographical dot.²⁸⁵

In the essay "Självsyn" Ekelöf also emphasizes that it was through Mesterton rather than through personal initiative or discovery that his first contact with the Anglo-American modernist Eliot took place:

I first got to know Eliot through Mesterton, at the earliest in 1930 or 1931 and completely French-oriented as I was then he did not say much to me. I did not get any contact. . . . In the spring of 1932 I read the Boye-Mesterton translation of The Waste Land with an interest in the details, yet hardly in the whole. Late on Earth was then already finished. . . .²⁸⁶

According to Erik Hjalmar Linder's account in Fem decennier av nittonhundratalet (Five Decades of the 20th Century), Clarté was in its beginnings a radical student group with a pacifist and socialist emphasis which developed in Lund in 1922. It functioned as a focus for two radical interests: marxism and psychoanalysis.²⁸⁷ As far as the literary journal Spektrum is concerned, it was organized and led by the two brothers Riwkin, Jews who had emigrated from Russia. Ekelöf gives a rather impressionistic account of the Spektrum venture in his essay "Ett 30-talsöde" (A Destiny of the 30's) (Promenader och utflykter), an essay which describes the destiny of one Håkansson, a victim in the Spanish Civil War to whom the poem "Jarrama" in Non serviam is dedicated.²⁸⁸ It was in the Spektrum circle that Ekelöf

came in contact with what Brandell has called the "neologism" of the period, i.e. the systematic opposition to all forms of tradition, as well as with psychoanalysis:

The enterprise was outwardly quite respectable and one could really only say about the published products that one either shared or did not share the opinions put forward in them, but it gained its shady character through the initiators, two Jews of dubious business ethics. . . .

Such was he [^oHåkansson] and such was the milieu in which he-- as it were out of idleness--spent most of his time. I was there many times when there were discussions of Russia, libido, Le Corbusier etc. They were revolutionary discussions insofar as their point of departure was that the most completely traditionless state was the ideal state and that such a traditionless state was a conceivable future possibility. All moods or notions which could not be dissolved into purely intellectual components were scornfully dismissed. All manifestations of life were looked on as functions, all personal characteristics were interpreted and given an obscene, ridiculous or base meaning. No one has been so misused as "Father Freud."²⁸⁹

"Prufrock," Promenader och utflykter and Ekelöf's Eliot Contacts during the War Years; Eliot, Petronius and the Theme of Impotence

At least from a superficial point of view Ekelöf's prose collection of 1941-1947 Promenader och utflykter bears the most traces of his interest in Eliot during the war years. The quotation from the opening of "Prufrock" ("Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky . . . ") which serves as a motto for Promenader. Småprosa (Walks. Little Prose Pieces); the title of one of the "noveller" of this collection "Vad åskan sade" (What the Thunder Said), drawn of course from The Waste Land;

and finally the title of another "novell" "Gerontion," taken from the poem of Eliot by the same name: all these testify to Ekelöf's interest in Eliot during the 40's. It is difficult if not impossible, however, to determine in just what measure these Eliot reminiscences are the result of an entirely personal, positive interest in Eliot or rather the consequence of a rather less personally motivated interest in Eliot coinciding with the work on the Eliot translations, translations which were published in such journals as BLM and Konstrevy (Art Review) as well as in the collected edition of T. S. Eliot's Dikter (Poems), translated by Ekelöf and Ronald Bottrall and published by Bonniers in 1942. The latter collection appears to have been commissioned by Bonniers to honour the arrival of the goodwill ambassador Eliot in Sweden in that same year 1942, as Ekelöf indicates in an "enquête" in Röster i Radio:

But I cannot say that I ever penetrated deeper into his [Eliot's] world until I myself began to translate. It has often been done under confused and difficult circumstances and I am not always satisfied with the result: in this manner the Collected Poems published in 1942 (in collaboration with Ronald Bottrall) came about under the strain of incredible time limitations due to Eliot's impending arrival in Sweden by "flying carpet," and the translations which I contributed (with the exception of East Coker) can be seen as scamped work.²⁹⁰

In the context of the translations which Ekelöf published in his own name and which were of the works of authors whom he regarded as his "elective affinities" (from the Chinese poets and Petronius to Hölderlin, Samuel Butler and James Joyce), it is perhaps not without significance that there is a notable lacuna: T. S. Eliot (if one excludes the volume commissioned by Bonniers).

Ekelöf's contacts with Knut Jaensson and Tora (Dahl) Jaensson, that

literary couple who seem to have been so decisive an influence behind many a Swedish literary figure, Erik Lindegren for one, during the war years must have been designed to encourage an interest in Eliot, much as the contact with Boye and Mesterton had done in the Spektrum years, but to what extent the interest in the American poet's work was something to which Ekelöf would in any case have come of his own accord is hard to determine. Tora Jaensson in any case gives an enthusiastic account of several lectures and readings which Eliot apparently gave during the same lecture-goodwill tour which prompted the Ekelöf-Bottrall volume of Eliot translations:

Knut has heard two lectures by Eliot and I heard only the last one, the one on Shakespeare. Then we heard him read poems and it was something one had never heard before. It was melodious and rhythmical like music. He read Burnt Norton with convincing intensity, like a missa solennis. . . . He must hear his poems as a composer hears his musical compositions.²⁹¹

Compte tenu of the possible distortions brought about by the retrospective vantage point and by Ekelöf's desire to defend his own artistic integrity against the onslaughts of the students of "influence," one can cite his emphasis in an unpublished commentary on the polemical intentions behind the inclusion of all the above-mentioned Eliot borrowings in Promenader och utflykter:

In this mood of sympathy [of the war years] I put a quote from "Pmfrock" at the beginning of Walks [Promenader], which contains retrospective, autobiographical sketches. I also called a cause-rie "What the Thunder Said." But what the girls sang whom I then met while cycling was an indecent song with the word "fuck" as a rhyme word. In a flash I caught the melody and this word. And this is a polemic against an Eliot who has been set and who has set himself on a pedestal, not a loan. The same is true

of the prose piece "Gerontion" in Excursions [Utflykter]. There the polemic is aimed at the confinement of an enfeebled Sweden during the War, with reference to Eliotian impotence such as it, when it is a matter of natural functions, has found expression in almost all of his poems.²⁹²

In his chapter on the 40's in Sweden entitled "Mellan det likgiltiga och det omöjliga" (Between the Indifferent and the Impossible) in Fem decennier av nittonhundratalet, Erik Hjalmar Linder has given an adequate description of the sense of impotency occasioned in Sweden by the Second World War and the "dilemma of neutrality" (Linder), which forced Swedish artists to sanction tacitly a moral situation which they knew to be reprehensible.²⁹³

This sense of paralysis and impotency is the dominating tone of En Mölna-Elegi with its theme of "den aldrig började resan" (the journey which is never begun) and is summarized in the lines of the 1942 Ars fragment of the poem:

The wheels spin and spin,
the fools stand there and grin
at every station,
while the train goes further
without arriving at milder zones,
without going anywhere . . .

But in addition to this theme of the thwarted escape, of the escape revealing itself as an illusion or impossibility, which clearly corresponds to what Ekelöf in the passage above calls "the confinement of an enfeebled Sweden during the War" (den svenska orkeslösa instängdheten under kriget), his polemic against Swedish impotency also takes on a more specifically erotic or sexual emphasis. Thus the apparently trivial "Sexual Ditty" (Sjöberg) of the Elegy (pp. 33-35-37) with its tone of Bellman and Birger Sjöberg has

the lines "At six / he gets a complex" (35, 379-380).²⁹⁴ Sjöberg's-
 Rukeyser's translation misses the point entirely when it translates this
 merely as: "Then at six / more complex tricks." Ekelöf's emphasis on and
 polemics against "Eliotian impotence" (den eliotska impotensen) becomes
 apparent in his obituary notice for T. S. Eliot, originally written for
Dagens Nyheter of 5 January 1965 and then reprinted in the posthumous volume
 of essays Lägga patience. Ekelöf writes there of Prufrock and Eliot:

Prufrock is there in his curious, retired anonymity, and he formu-
 lates what in part must have been Eliot's own situation: he has
 heard the mermaids sing to each other, but he does not think they
 will call him. The fact remains that he has heard them and that
 already is a kind of call, not necessarily to one who is erotically
 passive but to one who is erotically dispirited.²⁹⁵

The lines in Eliot's "Prufrock" to which Ekelöf refers in his criticism of
 the former's sexual defeatism are: "I have heard the mermaids singing, each
 to each. / I do not think that they will sing to me."²⁹⁶ In an unpublished
 "influence" commentary Ekelöf takes up this motif of the sirens to indicate
 his refusal to identify with Eliot's puritanism and defeatism:

"I grow old, I grow old / I shall wear the bottom of my trousers
 rolled": I can never make such defeatism my own. I am a sanguine
 person and an oppositionist even now (against the so-called welfare
 society). I think, I even know that the mermaids have sung just
 for me.²⁹⁷

I wonder whether it is without significance in this context that Ekelöf in
 his "Waste Land" poem En Mölna-Elegi includes a reproduction of the "Tyramo"
 Odysseus and the sirens on a heathen sarcophagus, taken from Kaufmann's book
Altchristliche Epigraphik (p. 9 of the poem).²⁹⁸

Although to point it out may be somewhat extraneous to the purposes of literary criticism, which, as critics such as Frye and Brooks would have us believe, is not to evaluate and judge but "merely" to constare, Ekelöf's largely emotional reaction against and repudiation of Eliot's puritanism with regard to all vital functions is not an isolated phenomenon. A study of Pound's deletions from a draft to the "Fire Sermon" in The Waste Land, a draft which, following on the distracted sexual encounter of the "young man carbuncular" with the bored typist in her second-rate lodgings, reads:

Bestows one final kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit;
And at the corner where the stable is,
Delays only to urinate, and spit.²⁹⁹

reveals even Pound's awareness of Eliot's almost perverse puritanism, since the great mentor and adviser has commented in the margin in his usual laconic but penetrating way: "probaly [sic] over the mark." Even such an important critic of The Waste Land as F. R. Leavis has written categorically: "Sex here is sterile, breeding not life and fulfillment but disgust, accidia and unanswerable questions."³⁰⁰ Egbert Faas in a chapter on The Waste Land in his book on the open-form has summarized this aspect of Eliot's constitution as it reveals itself in the drafts and in Pound's editing:

Die Urfassung desselben Abschnitts gleicht einer unfreiwilligen Parodie der hier zum Ausdruck kommenden Geisteshaltung. Selbst Ezra Pound, gewiss kein Anhänger D. H. Lawrences in Fragen der Sexualität, muss seine Geduld auf eine harte Probe gestellt gesehen haben. . . . Derselbe Puritanismus, der in solchen Versen immer wieder ein unfreiwilliges Bekenntnis seines krankhaften Verhältnisses zum Kreatürlichen ablegt, verbot dem Dichter jede Form bewusster Bekenntnishaftigkeit in der Lyrik.³⁰¹

Ekelöf in several instances has indicated his lack of sympathy for what he believes to be Eliot's defeatism, a defeatism which manifests itself in the sexual sphere in the form of erotic dispiritedness and an aversion to vital bodily functions. In his characterization of the Swedish 40's or "40-tal," Erik Hjalmar Linder speaks of a "trots allt" (in spite of everything) attitude as being characteristic of the period and sees this attitude symbolized in Camus' Le mythe de Sisyphe, whose hero or antihero is forced "to act in complete awareness of the fact that the act does no good." (att handla i fullt medvetande om att handlingen inte gör nytta.)³⁰² Something analogous to this attitude seems to be present in Ekelöf's poem from the 40's "Samo-thrake" as examined earlier. The passivity of a Prufrock and the reactionary values expressed in Eliot's cultural criticism are quite foreign to an Ekelöf who during the prewar years can write: "O, even now in these deadly times, / something is still certain: that he alone / who serves life shall survive." (O även nu, i dessa dödens tider, / står ändå något fast: att den allena, / som tjänar livets sak, skall överleva.)³⁰³ Interestingly enough, in the previously mentioned unpublished Petronius commentary, in which a comparison between Eliot and Petronius is clearly implied if not explicitly expressed, Ekelöf views the theme of impotency in the Roman satirist's novel The Satyricon as an anticipatory paradigm of postwar (post World War I) impotency and disillusionment:

He [Trimalchio] belongs to our time. And so do the others too, above all the three characters who take charge of the plot of The Satyricon: Encolpius, Ascyltos and Giton, for their, especially Encolpii, destiny seems to be Priapos' curse, the erotic irregularity and homelessness which was one of the characteristics of the postwar years and which haunted most of the best and most serious novels, short stories and poems of the 20's and 30's.³⁰⁴

As Kindlers Literaturlexikon points out in its entry on The Satyricon, the motif of impotency is indeed central to the plot of the novel:

Als leitmotivisches Band, die die einzelnen Episoden verknüpft, fungiert die hartnäckige Ungnade des phallischen Gottes Priapos, die Encolpius wegen eines Kultfrevels leichtsinnig auf sich gezogen hat. Immer wieder erleben wir unseren „Helden“ in verzweifelten Situationen akuter Impotenz, und deren verzweifelte beschwört gar ein fürchterliches Lynchgericht herauf, an dem sich das gesamte Gesinde der Herrin [Circe] beteiligt. Erst aufrichtige Reue und Gelübde vermögen den Gott am Ende des Fragments zu bewegen, die kompromittierende Strafe zurückzunehmen.³⁰⁵

En Mólna-Elegi, The Waste Land and the Cumaean Sibyl:

Common Sources in Petronius

If our emphasis has shifted away from a comparison of Eliot's Four Quartets and Ekelöf's Färjesång with a view to examining the possibility of an influence having occurred there towards a confrontation of Eliot's The Waste Land with En Mólna-Elegi, such a shift in emphasis is justified for several reasons. To begin with, Ekelöf's "influence" commentaries read like a defence of his artistic integrity and originality against the charge of influence on all fronts, not just with respect to Four Quartets and Färjesång, and he himself makes such a shift frequently in the commentaries, where it is just as much a question of The Waste Land and En Mólna-Elegi. Secondly, numerous critics have taken up the possibility of such an influence, usually of course with reference to the use of the open-form and the quotation-allusion technique. Thirdly, the homologies present between the two works are so apparent that if anywhere in Ekelöf's production the hypothesis of an Eliot influence appears to be at all justified it is here. I have

already cited Ekelöf's own labelling of the Elegy as a "Waste Land" poem in the letters of April 1941 and that alone should make an examination of the two poems with a view to uncovering possible influences unavoidable, not even to mention the fact that Eliot is cited several times in the Mölna manuscripts. A letter of Ekelöf to Knut and Tora Jaensson of 10-11 May 1942 also points to what is at least a superficial "morphological" influence of Eliot on En Mölna-Elegi: "The Mölna Elegy will no doubt be something which will have a taste of the new; a dramatic poem with stage directions, a bit à la Coleridge: "The Ancient Mariner," a bit à la Eliot, mostly à la myself." (Mem Mölna-Elegin blir nog något som kommer att lukta nytt; ett dramatiskt poem med scenanvisningar, litet à la Coleridge: "The Ancient Mariner", litet à la Eliot, mest à la mig själv.)³⁰⁶

Petronius is present in both The Waste Land in the form of an introductory motto referring to the Cumaean Sibyl and in En Mölna-Elegi. In the latter work the "stage direction" applied to Baucis (p. 34) which reads "(recocta vino / trementibus labellis)" and which Ekelöf employs in a kind of ironic inversion of the idyll of the loving old couple Baucis and Philemon whose hospitality to Hermes and Zeus was later rewarded by the gods (a mythological tale which has its place in both Ovid's Metamorphoses and Goethe's Faust II) is originally one of the fragments of Petronius (XXI). In translation it reads in context: "An old woman soaked in wine, / A trembling on her lips."³⁰⁷ The expression "Madeia perimadeia" which is used on page 36 of the Elegy in Greek characters is also drawn from Petronius (Cena Trimalchionis, 52,9). In the Elegy it is presumably sung by a chorus ("Omnes") as in the original context in Petronius. The meaning of the term has been much disputed by classical scholars. Martin Smith in his edition of the Cena comments on the lines thus: "various interpretations and conjec-

tures have been put forward. Ribbeck and later de Lorenzi . . . have suggested that the text [of Petronius] originally contained the names Medea and Perimede, possibly used as a magic incantation in some mime."³⁰⁸ Another reference work defines the expression as "cordax cantilena,"³⁰⁹ i.e. as the song or chant of a "cordax," a "cordax" being "der unzüchtige Tanz der att. [attischen] Komödie."³¹⁰ The fragment of the Elegy entitled "Pompejansk scen" (Pompeian Scene) which Ekelöf published in the journal Prisma in 1949 reads like a 'Gestaltung' of just such a "cordax" or obscene dance and begins with the lines "Madeia! / Perimadeia!"

There can be little doubt that Ekelöf conceived the Elegy with its more associative than organically unified structure on the model of a "Menippean satire," "that is to say a mixture of prose and verse, all the way from obscene revue songs to epic fragments." (d. v. s. en blandning av prosa och vers, alltifrån obscena kupletter till episka fragment.)³¹¹ Although there are no extant models of the genre, Petronius' The Satyricon is often associated with it. The introduction to the Penguin translation of Petronius' work associates Menippean satire with "looseness of structure, tolerance of digressions, opportunities for versification."³¹² A plan to Mölna has the significant notation: "Menippean" (Menippeisk). Although it would be absurd to view mere looseness of structure as the only or chief generic condition of this literary art form, about which only conjectures as to its precise nature are possible, the applicability of the term "Menippean" to the associative, open-form quality of Ekelöf's En Mölna Elegi seems apparent.

One particular textual similarity between T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land and En Mölna-Elegi which could be used, but I think mistakenly, in support of claims of influence is the role of the Cumæan Sibyl in both works. Eliot draws on Petronius and the Greek words of the Sibyl "I want to die" in

response to the question "Sibyl, what do you want?" for the epigraph of his long, more connotative than denotative poem The Waste Land, but if Hugh Kenner's reconstruction of the genesis of the poem is correct--and there seems little reason to question it in view of the drafts to the poem edited by Valerie Eliot, which support his view--Eliot's use of the Petronius quotation came as an afterthought, for Pound "nagged about the Conrad epigraph [from The Heart of Darkness] until a better one was discovered in Petronius."³¹³ If anything then the involvement with Petronius seems to have been less an organic part of the genesis of The Waste Land than of that of the Elegy. Ekelöf's interest in Petronius was continuous from his very first readings of the Roman satirist while at "gymnasium" and in a commentary to Sjöberg of 12 October 1963 he is careful to underline the fact that he did not come to Petronius' use of the Cumaean Sibyl via Eliot: "The ref. [reference] to Petronius [Petronius] I got from a (bad) Sw. [Swedish] trans. of Cena (not from E's [Eliot's] quote about the Sibyl), found somewhere, God only knows where." [Ref. till Petr. fick jag av en (dålig) sv. övers. av Cena (inte av E:s citat om Sibyllan), hittad någonstans, guvett var.]³¹⁴

There is an extended commentary of Ekelöf on the Sibyl of Cumae in a draft of an article "Neapel betyder" (Naples Means) which he apparently published in Dagens Nyheter in 1954 or 1955 following an extended visit to the region of Naples during the winter of 1954-1955.³¹⁵

Cumae was the oldest colony of the Greeks in Italy (?) and the mother city of Naples itself. For a long time the Cumaean Sibyl played the same role in the western Latin world that the oracle in Delphi played for the eastern. Among the common people this horror-filled veneration continued to survive even after the oracle became silent during the first reign of the Caesars, indeed far into Christian times, since the Sibyl, just as Vergil too, was

assumed to have prophesied Christ and the Last Judgment and thus became half canonized although she belonged to heathendom. The mediaeval Dies irae . . . bears witness to this.

And of the five Sibyls which Michelangelo painted in the Sistine Chapel there is only one which has a profound, personally experienced physiognomy, the Cumaean. The others are only quite ordinary models. But in the Cumaean Sibyl M. has portrayed a popular Roman ancestress, an old stern and fierce shrew who reigns over a whole backyard full of children and grandchildren by virtue of her dominating voice and volubility present everywhere in the echo space between the leaning and crumbling courtyard walls. Vergil depicts her indeed roaring and tempestuous in her frenzy and it is probably this depiction, but also a dominant popular model, which he [Michelangelo] went by. She has been endowed with a book--that is the so-called Sibylline Books--a later Christian falsification. According to V. [Vergil] she scratched her words on leaves and let them fly and it was the task of the questioner to put these words together into a meaning.³¹⁶

Pär Hellström associates the Cumaean Sibyl and her habit of writing her oracles on leaves with the poem "Ex Ponto" in Stroutnes,³¹⁷ which contains the lines "And you are to be a nutshell for destiny / and as an unwritten maple-leaf cast on the shore / drying there in the sand" (Och du skall bli som ett ödets nötskal / och someett oskrivet lönnblad uppkastat på strand / torkande där i sanden), and although it is not entirely possible to rule out the association of the Cumaean Sibyl with these particular lines, it lies much closer to hand to associate the figure of the Sibyl with the opening lines of the Elegy: "I write on a leaf of the past. / September snows down in red leaves." (Jag skriver på ett blad i det förgångna. / September snöar ned i röda löv. 9, 2-3) In this respect Leif Sjöberg's-Muriel Rukeyser's English translation "I write on a page of the past" appears inadequate, since it loses entirely the association and overlooks the double meaning of the Swedish "blad" (leaf of a tree, leaf of a page), a double

meaning which is preserved in most western European languages (Blatt-Blatt, feuille-feuille, foglia-foglio, leaf-leaf, hoja-joja).

Ekelöf's literal use of the term "blad" in this opening line can be viewed as an example of what Emerson has called "fossil poetry": the poet etymologizes and takes a word at face value, thus discovering or uncovering the ancient roots of what has become a shopworn and trivial word. In fact leaves were the very first writing materials and language somehow has retained a sense of this.

That the related words "blad" and "löv" and their association with the Cumaean Sibyl had their significance in the genesis of En Mölna-Elegi is supported by several notes in the manuscripts of the poem. One series of notes (folder 'c') has the notation "löv"; another detailed plan for "A dream-elegy. Mölna" (En dröm-elegi. Mölna) (folder 'j'), along with the name of the main character in Petronius' novel (Encolpius), has the notation "Cumaean Sibyl" (Cumanska sibyllan). An important series of notes (folder 'j') or more precisely stage directions for the dramatic poem Mölna can be transcribed into English as follows (excluding the last five lines which are untranslatable in their genetic significance):

(Mölna jetty. Beyond the water the Södra Bergen off Fäkäng.
To the right the foliage of Djurgården. Above them a glimpse of a tower or two. One hears the ringing of the city's bells.
Johan Dureen sits on a bench under the trees a bit inland.
He is well muffled up, with hat, scarf round a few times around his neck, ulster, his hands in his pockets, overshoes. He watches the sun set.)

La durée Dureen
Nuflöde Löf Undell Nedlöf
Nend
Philosophizing emotionally Edun Duen
Nude 318

Leif Sjöberg has commented on these notes³¹⁹ and indicated Ekelöf's intention of giving his chief protagonist a name ("Duréen," with the characteristic Swedish name suffix "-én" such as in Norén) which would refer to Bergson's term for inner, psychological time while at the same time it would be an anagram of his own name Gunnar Ekelöf; Bengt Landgren has for his part identified the term "muflöde" as being Algot Ruhe's Swedish equivalent for Bergson's term "la durée," but just as significant as the philosophical background to these genetic meanderings of Ekelöf is the phonetic juggling which has motivated such terms as "muflöde," "löf," "Nedlöf" and of course "Ekelöf" (not formally present here but certainly present in the penumbra of the poet's mind): with a few negligible exceptions these various combinations of vowels and consonants can all be derived from the letters of the poet's own name. That Ekelöf (Eke-löf: "Oak-leaves") was sensitive to the sounds, the phonetics of his own name and enjoyed playing with them with a kind of mock seriousness is testified to by the Dadaist or nonsense poem "Fageröunken" (the title untranslatable) in Opus incertum, all of the lines or verses of which, in a grotesque series of absurd stage directions fully in accordance with the rules of syntax--if one can speak of such a thing here--but semantically nonsensical, can be constructed using the letters in "Fageröunken's" (Gunnar Ekelöf's) own name. In fact such word-name games can be followed all the way through Ekelöf's life and an examination of Ekelöf's "skolpojksdikter" (schoolboy verse) reveals that the name "Fursten av Emgion" (The Prince of Emgion) which Ekelöf attached to his alter ego in the "Diwan" trilogy can already be found there.³²⁰ Needless to say the critic who attempts to reconstruct the apparently fortuitous workings of a poet's mind, governed as they are by entirely private or idiosyncratic associations and reminiscences, is treading on dangerous ground, for as Hugh Kenner has said: "In the course of inventing a poetic structure any-

thing in the penumbra of the poet's attention may suggest a word: even a page of the Classical Review looked at sideways."³²¹

Like the oracles of the Cumaean Sibyl Ekelöf's open-form poem En Målna-Elegi reads like a series of fragments; the reader of Ekelöf's poem has the task of the visitor to the Cumaean oracle, who, in Ekelöf's own words had to "piece these words together into a meaning" (sammanfoga dessa ord till en mening).

From a different point of view the association of fragments of the past with leaves is also to be found in a stanza of a poem in James Joyce's Chamber Music, a work from which Ekelöf translated selections for his volume Valfrändskaper (Elective Affinities):

XXXII

RAIN has fallen all the day.
O come among the laden trees.
The leaves lie thick upon the way
of memories.³²²

One particular Ekelöf commentary stresses in a very convincing way the importance of the motif of the leaves in Målna; Ekelöf associates here the lyrical "jag" (I) or "narr" (fool) of the opening lines of the poem with the leaves and emphasizes the more associative than linear structure of the work:

Already on the jetty the problem of identity is important for everything which follows. Who is it that is sitting there? I and not I, or I and no longer I? Who is the fool? The gaudy autumn all around with the motley leaves. What are the autumn and the autumn leaves? Fragmentary memories, meaningful or only "such as occur to one," which by God is just as meaningful. What is this ghost of an ego who is sitting there doing? You say that he is writing. Like hell, how would that be possible. He is a passively experiencing medium which lets "it" happen, just as the air lets the leaves flutter through it.³²³

Although certain striking textual resemblances do exist between The Waste Land and En Mölna-Elegi with respect to Petronius, the theme of impotency and the figure of the Cumaean Sibyl, it appears more appropriate here to speak of common sources than of influence and it is most unlikely that Eliot could have been a decisive influence on Ekelöf with respect to the Latin writer. Ekelöf's own lifelong interest in Petronius is testified to by his numerous translations of the satirist, notably for BLM and for his own volume Valfrändskaper, and by such statements as: "Petronius, Baudelaire, the Upanishads etc. are quoted in The Waste Land; are they therefore Eliot's property[?] I read them long before I knew that Eliot existed." (Petronius, Baudelaire, Upanishaderna etc. är citerade i The Waste Land, är de därför Eliot's ägendom. Jag läste dem långt innan jag visste att Eliot fanns.)³²⁴

Further, as already emphasized, Petronius appears to have played a more decisive role in Ekelöf's authorship than in that of Eliot and while the emphasis which Eliot gives to Petronius in the selection of the particular quotation at the beginning of The Waste Land is, as Hugh Kenner has made clear, primarily negative and life-denying, that is something that one can hardly say of the aspects of Petronius which Ekelöf stresses.

Common Sources in The Tempest and Shakespearean Sea Symbolism;

Shakespeare, Joyce and Petronius as Influences on Ekelöf

One element which has been a significant factor in provoking and then later supporting claims of influence with respect to Eliot and Ekelöf has been the use which both poets have made of Shakespeare's The Tempest, its Ariel's song and the theme of death by water. In their treatment of Färjesång Carl Fehrman and Alrik Gustafson have all used the fact that Ekelöf at the beginning of the book version of the work (in contrast to the form in which it

was reprinted in the edition of the collected poems of Ekelöf) has placed a quote from Ariel's song "Those are pearls that were his eyes" (in the Swedish version: Till dig, som stormen tagit, / vars ögon nu är pärlor), a quote which Eliot also employs in his own mosaic The Waste Land, as proof of an influence having occurred. Bengt Holmqvist in his Nya Argus article of 1947 is in this respect the most categorical, even going so far as to maintain that by incorporating such a quote Ekelöf was intentionally suggesting his own "tacksamhetsskuld" (debt of gratitude) to Eliot.³²⁵ Fehrman is a bit more cautious, viewing Eliot rather as a transmitter of the Shakespearean sea symbolism of The Tempest to an entire generation of poets: "For Ekelöf's generation the poem [Ariel's song] has gained new topicality through Eliot's The Waste Land, where a line from the poem is used as a leitmotiv: 'Those are pearls that were his eyes.'" (För Ekelöf's generation har dikten fått ny aktualitet genom Eliots The waste land, där en rad i dikten använts som ledmotiv: Hans ögon äro pärlor nu.)³²⁶

That Ekelöf in any significant way could have been "influenced" by T. S. Eliot with respect to Ariel's song and its association with the theme of death by water is highly implausible. He himself has underlined the popularity of the Shakespearean sea symbolism and Ariel's song in a note attached to a translation of the song:

In Shakespeare's The Tempest I found the following song (very famous, often quoted in anthologies), sung by Ariel, for your 18th century collection. If you were to take out your old surrealism and wed it with your naturalistic-romantic gleanings into an under-sea landscape with marine backgrounds! and the old man disappearing into the surroundings!³²⁷

Furthermore as Reidar Ekner has pointed out in a previously cited note to an article on "Panthoidens sång," the theme of death by water as far as it

was associated with Shakespeare and The Tempest was common property during the 19th and 20th centuries. Malcolm Lowry in a short piece "Strange Comfort Afforded by the Profession" mentions the fact that a bit of Ariel's song was even inscribed on Shelley's gravestone.³²⁸ Examples of the use in modern 19th and 20th century literature of the "Shakespearean" motif of death by water are in addition no rare occurrence. Rimbaud in one of his early poems developed the theme ("Ophélie") and it apparently was very à la mode among French Parnassian poets such as Banville, from whom it could have been transmitted to Rimbaud.³²⁹ It was probably through Rimbaud that Shakespeare's theme or symbolism reached Georg Heym, who in 1910 wrote his "Ophelia I-II."³³⁰ Another famous Rimbaud apprentice, Bertolt Brecht, in his heavily Rimbaud-inspired Hauspostille collection included a poem about drowning entitled "Vom ertrunkenen Mädchen," composed in 1920:

Als ihr bleicher Leib im Wasser verfaulet war
 Geschah es (sehr langsam), dass Gott sie allmählich vergass
 Erst ihr Gesicht, dann die Hände und dann zuletzt erst ihr Haar.
 Dann ward sie Aas in Flüssen mit vielem Aas.³³¹

There is enough of The Tempest in En Mølne-Elegi to warrant the belief that Ekelöf's interest in the play was firsthand and not necessarily mediated by Eliot. It is above all the faerie scene of the Elegy (pp. 15-20) which bears the mark of The Tempest: "This section is based above all on very actual impressions of the Sleeping Beauty castle which Mølne was, then on Shakespeare." (Avsnittet bygger främst på rena verklighetsintryck från det Törnrosaslott som Mølne var, därnäst på Shakespeare.)³³² A note in Ekelöf's annotated copy of the poem identifies the mill-gnome or "den där fule" (that ugly one there), which is the way in which the elf of the poem addresses him, as Caliban, the savage, "monster" or "missshapen knave"

of Shakespeare's play. When the blind window exclaims apropos the protagonist of the Elegy "-Men hur kan Prospero / vara vid liv? och här? (20, 169-170), this is a word-for-word transposition of the King of Naples Alonso's exclamation in Shakespeare's play (Act V, Scene I, 118-119):

"-But how should Prospero / Be living and be here?" With ultimate fidelity to Shakespeare's text, Ekelöf has even retained the hyphen of the original.

As for The Tempest and its treatment of death by water, the interest in that particular play and theme seems to have been "in the air" during the first half of this century. As proof thereof one can cite a passage from the beginning of James Joyce's Ulysses, where the reader penetrates into the consciousness of Stephen Dedalus, walking along the beach near Dublin:

The man that was drowned nine days ago off Maiden's rock. . . .
 A drowning man. His human eyes scream to me out of the horror
 of his death. I. . . With him together down . . . I could not
 save her. Waters: bitter death: lost. ³³³

.
 Five fathoms out there. Full fathom five thy father lies. At
 once he said. Found drowned. High water at Dublin bar. Driving
 before it a loose drift of rubble, fanshoals of fishes, silly
 shells. A corpse rising saltwhite from the undertow, bobbing land-
 ward, a pace a pace a porpoise. There he is. Hook it quick. Sunk
 though he be beneath the watery floor. We have him. Easy . . .
 now. . . .

A seachange this, brown eyes saltblue. Seadeath, mildest of
 all deaths known to man. . . . ³³⁴

Joyce's novel was written between the years 1914 and 1921, published in part serially in The Little Review from March 1918 to October 1920, where Eliot read it enthusiastically, and in full in 1922, the year in which The Waste Land was published. Eliot reviewed the book in The Dial of 1923. Ulysses

and The Waste Land: two works which were created within a few years of each other, which demonstrate a remarkable similarity with respect to the use of or the interest in Shakespeare's The Tempest and yet only one of which is assumed to have influenced Ekelöf with respect to Shakespeare. Or is there reason to assume that Joyce influenced Eliot in this particular regard, as we can assume that he must have been somewhat of an influence on Eliot's use of the "mythical method"? What appears to be valid for Eliot and Joyce-- that one has to do here with parallelisms brought about by similar conditions and a commonly shared cultural ambience--should be seen as equally applicable to Ekelöf and Eliot and their use of Shakespearean sea symbolism. Indeed this concept of the "parallelism" is one which Ekelöf in several commentaries wishes to see replace an overworked and falsifying emphasis on "influences":

There are parallelisms. Two people in completely different places can have the same experience and draw the same conclusions, for example invent the same steam engine, for we humans are not so different from each other but that this is possible. Everything we do is a sort of extension of our senses and on these depend, to a large extent, our "soul," our destinies and adventures and our achievements [last three words in English]. Not even time plays a decisive role; I mean by that that similar inventions best come about in a living situation shared by both parties. ³³⁵

A second commentary in English similarly stresses the greater significance of the universally human as opposed to so-called "influences":

Man's situation is, at least for those who have a view of the bottom as well as of the height, very similar throughout the world and in all times and climes. Now, a similar situation or destiny quite naturally breeds similar thoughts and solutions. This fact should be kept in mind rather more than the possibility of influences. . . . ³³⁶

A final example of this Ekelöfian elaboration of the concept of cultural "parallelisms," an elaboration based on a not necessarily profound or unusually perceptive awareness that the generally human is perhaps a more decisive motor of cultural phenomena than so-called "influences," runs:

Literature is in a certain respect one and indivisible. There is namely in our day (as in earlier periods) what I would call a poetical foreign legion. Develop. Often the members do not know each other, there are perhaps a thousand miles between them and they have never heard each other's names or read a line of each other. But man does not deviate more from the category and man's circumstances, moral, social and artistic, are not so different but that several contemporaries can have arrived at similar, indeed almost identical or downright identical formulations. Our emotional life in certain universal situations gives the same response and our intellectual life furnishes the same solution. This is the parallelism of art.³³⁷

One may indeed with complete justification ask the question as to why the influence sticklers have never supposed the possibility of an influence of Joyce on Ekelöf. Ekelöf has included a quote from Finnegans Wake in En Mölna-Elegi: "When the h, who the hu, how the hue, where the huer?" (57, 688-689) Joyce is mentioned several times in manuscript annotations to Mölna; folder 'j' has, for example, the note: ". . . Peer Gynt. Encolpius. Tiresias. S. Dedalus." While the previously cited unpublished Petronius commentary mentions T. S. Eliot and his The Waste Land in connection with Petronius, cites the significance of Eliot's having chosen a motto from Petronius for his own poem and points out the similarity between a Petronius, an Eliot neither of whom eschewed a representation of "die Nachtseite des Lebens," it is just as much Baudelaire and Joyce whom Ekelöf has in mind when he analyzes the anticipatory modernity of Petronius' great "stads-

roman" (urban novel) The Satyricon, "où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant"³³⁸ and where the main character Encolpius experiences something analogous to existential Angst in the loneliness of the city: "He [Petronius] was of course not the first urban poet in history. But the first for whom the big city is a person--a kind of collective--like Dublin for Joyce." (Han var väl inte den förste storstadsdiktaren i hist. Men den förste hos vilken ~~st~~staden är en person--ett slags kollektiv--som Dublin hos Joyce.)³³⁹ A note in Ekelöf's notebook T (1942) indicates three great interests of Ekelöf during a period during which he can be assumed to have been steeped in work on Mölna: "Shakespeare, Joyce, Petr. [Petronius] intensity of interest." (Shakespeare, Joyce, Petr. intensitet i intresset.)³⁴⁰ The omission of Eliot's name is significant.

Ekelöf, Eliot and Swedenborg: Neoplatonism and the Cyclical World View

Further themes or motifs the presence of which in the work of Ekelöf and Eliot could conceivably be used in support of the view that Eliot significantly influenced Ekelöf in En Mölna-Elegi are those related notions of metempsychosis and of the cyclical nature of life. The significant passage in The Waste Land is (section I, lines 69-75):

There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson!
 'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
 'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
 'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
 'O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
 'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again! . . .'

As for the Elegy it would not be entirely out of order to view the trans-

formations undergone by its main protagonist as a series of reincarnations. The theme of the natural cycles, of life conceived cyclically, dominates most conspicuously the "La Brinvilliers" section of the poem (49, 538-553):

No, let me be cast into the sea
 without cannonball, without banner
 slowly disintegrate integrate
 No, just be burnt to ashes
 and cast into the sea
 That way shall I drown also in the air
 The smoke shall have carried me over gardens
 The lightest element of me rest in the stratosphere
 The average part of me lie as manure
 in every man's garden
 while the heaviest shall sink to the bottom
 and melt into the midpoint of all things
 and the subtle part shall fly like spores
 to kindle new life. Enfin c'en est fait,
 La Brinvilliers est en l'air
 de sorte que nous la respirons!

If to any one philosophical tradition, it seems best to trace Ekelöf's speculation in poetic form on the cyclical character of natural phenomena back to Emanuel Swedenborg and the Neoplatonists. In Martin Lamm's brilliant account, we read that Swedenborg conceived of the soul or "anima" subsequent to physical death as something which corresponds remarkably well with what Ekelöf in this passage has termed "the subtle part" (det subtila). In Swedenborg's Neoplatonic cosmology the borderline between the spiritual and the physical is fluid:

Thanks to his Neoplatonic outlook Swedenborg thus still does not have to draw any distinct line between the spiritual and the material. The body becomes for him only the envelope of the soul, the stuff which only the intellect can separate from the form. It is by

virtue of this basic idea that Swedenborg in his theological system can to a certain extent spiritualize everything physical and embody everything spiritual.

Lamm writes further of the spiritual as it survives physical death in Swedenborg's conception:

For the soul is the body's most subtle [my stress] substance; it is therefore that we know with certainty that it is immortal, since it cannot be destroyed by the coarser elements. It cannot rot, perish by fire or air or in any other way. When the body dies, it frees itself from the latter's tissue and gathers itself, even though some scattered particles of it become lost.³⁴²

The acuteness and almost oppressiveness with which the presence of the dead and their deeds and misdeeds make themselves felt in En Mölna-Elegi finds its most adequate and exemplary expression in the quote from Heraclitus ("I die their lives, they live my death." [Jag dörr deras liv, de lever min död.]), where the chiasmic formulation represents perfectly that symbiosis of the dead and the living characteristic of Ekelöf's world view. This same symbiosis is also effectively represented in the quote from Madame de Sévigné's letter which reads: "La Brinvilliers est en l'air / de sorte que nous la respirons!"

That Ekelöf's attitude towards the dead--towards his dead, i.e. his own personal ancestors--can have a negative component is evidenced by a poem such as "Döden" (Death), published in the journal Perspektiv (Perspectives) in 1956: "And if I look at my life it is as if / I had been drawn incessantly to that / which put my ancestors to shame . . ." (Och ser jag på mitt liv är det som om / jag dragits oupphörligen till det / som kommit mina förfäder på skam . . .)

In a draft to the Elegy this negative element is even more accentuated:

"And Madame de Mont-Gentil's portrait / . . . The slave dealer's daughter, to her you are related." (Och fru de Mont-Gentils porträtt / . . . Slav-handlardottern, med henne är du släkt.)³⁴⁴ Characteristic of Swedenborg's attitude towards the dead is a similar awareness of their presence in the living in the form of a kind of "erbliche Belastung," which, however, does not cancel out the possibility of free will in the descendants:

On us the late-born the weight of all the preceding generations' repeated defections from the divine rests, not as an inescapable original sin which predestines us to hell but as an hereditary taint of evil inclinations. It is this which is symbolized by the fact that the souls of the deceased influence all our thoughts and feelings. God himself sees to it that the equilibrium between the angels and the evil spirits is always maintained in our inner selves, so that it is our free will which decides the matter. Our fall thus becomes just as self-inflicted as that of the first man.³⁴⁵

A note in Ekelöf's notebook E which apparently is a part of the first general conception of the Elegy emphasizes the importance of "the dead who live in me" (de döda som lever i mig): "Long time-poem or universal poem in which 'The Drowned' is included. Should it deal with the dead? Solely." (Stor tidsdikt el. universaldikt vari ingår De drunknade. Skall den handla om de döda? Enbart.)³⁴⁶

The association of the idea of a symbiosis of the living and the dead with the cyclical conception of life is, needless to say, not an isolated phenomenon in modern literature and need not necessarily be identified any more with T. S. Eliot than with a Joyce who in a passage of Ulysses can write: "God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain. Dead breaths I living breathe, tread dead dust, devour a urinous

offal from all dead."³⁴⁷ As far as the influence of Swedenborg on Ekelöf is concerned, it seems more reasonable to assume rather than the possibility of an influence the pre-existence of such conceptions as those outlined above in Ekelöf's world view; in the cosmology of his compatriot Swedenborg he could have discovered simply a ready-made form for his own preexisting and personal conceptions. Especially such Neoplatonic "Gedankengut" as the idea of a fluid boundary between the spiritual and the material or the idea of metempsychosis have been common property for centuries and as Hans Ruin has stressed there is no reason to assume an influence when a new writer makes use of them, makes them his own:

What I wish to stress is only that one should not attach too much importance to the outward adoption of ideas from various quarters. . . . One ought to distinguish between the spiritual or vital make-up out of which a poem has arisen and the external incitements which have brought about the poetic composition or the ready-made intellectual forms into which the poet's experience empties itself. . . .³⁴⁸

In a wording highly reminiscent of Ruin's, Ekelöf gives a subtle formulation of the functioning of such intellectual-philosophical "Gemeingut" as Neoplatonic conceptions or cyclical theories of life insofar as the individual author finds them adequate to his own needs and appropriates them, when he writes with respect to his own appropriation of Swedenborg's macrocosm-microcosm speculation:

Macrocosm-microcosm. My closest correlative is Swedenborg, who of course looks at God as the "homo maximus" in which we are particles. But it would be just as incorrect to say that I borrowed the idea as to say that it originally occurred to me. It only seemed immediately acceptable when I came across it. Here as elsewhere I belong to tradition.³⁴⁹

Ekelöf's interest in the idea of metempsychosis is evidenced by several examples. In an unpublished poem in the author's notebook AU (1965) we are led through a series of reincarnations as military men:

But!
 Forgive a simple man
 who has been in that war
 in many
 wars against himself
 . . .
 The affairs at Valkiala
 Austerlitz
 where I fell under an
 Armenian general
 stood up again
 at Leipzig
 orthodox
 etc. my slain ancestors
 live in me.

The poem "Laokoon" in En natt i Otacac also testifies to the poet's ability to undergo a series of reincarnations: "Thus I went through different stages: became a faun and a nymph and an old man and an old lady and a Hellenistic ruler and different gods and finally Laocoön writhing under the choking attacks of the snakes. . . ." (Så gick jag genom olika stadier: blev faun and nymf och gubbe och gumma och hellenistisk härskare och olika gudar och till sist Laokoon vridande mig under ormarnas kvävningsförsök. . . .)

The idea of metempsychosis is a standard constituent element in Platonic, Neoplatonic and Romantic thought and there is little reason to believe that Ekelöf assimilated it more from Eliot or Joyce than from any other source. The significance of metempsychosis for Joyce's Ulysses has been

underlined by several critics, for example Richard Ellman and Hugh Kenner. Kenner has stated that Leopold Bloom is literally Ulysses and that by treating one of his two main protagonists in this way Joyce was taking the doctrines of reincarnation of his countryman W. B. Yeats literally and pushing them to comic extremes.³⁵⁰ Kenner has also emphasized the role of metempsychosis in cyclical theories of history such as that which Joyce developed from his Vico studies. In fact the two appear to be inextricably related as even in the philosophy of the Pythagoreans where the transmigration of souls and "die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen" can hardly be distinguished from each other. Cyclical theories of history and the belief in metempsychosis are means of ordering an otherwise chaotic history, "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history"-- which is history in general--to quote from Eliot's formulation of the effect of the Joycean "mythical method" in his Dial review of Ulysses. Metempsychosis as a part of a cyclical view of history is what Kenner has called a "patterned energy," i.e. stasis in the midst of an inexorable flow. Or as Ruin has formulated it: "This entire notion of a series of metempsychoses which the soul undergoes presupposes the conception of something identical under all the varying forms." (Hela denna tanke om en seriesmetempsykosser, dem själen undergår, förutsätter föreställningen om någonting identiskt under alla de växlande formerna.)³⁵¹ Just how literally Ekelöf himself took the doctrine of reincarnation is difficult to determine but accustomed as we are with our rational way of thinking to view the belief in such phenomena as the mere quirks of a prelogical, superstitious fantasy, one could in conclusion in defence of such a belief cite Schopenhauer, one of the major thinkers to introduce Eastern thought into the Western philosophical tradition: "Der Glaube an Metempsychose stellt sich, wenn man auf seine allgemeine Verbreitung sieht, dar als die natürliche Überzeugung des Menschen, sobald er, unbefangen,

irgend nachdenkt."³⁵²

One can insist on another aspect of Neoplatonic thought (of which both Swedenborg and Stagnelius, Ekelöfian "elective affinities," are examples in Sweden) which has played a role in the conception of En Målna-Elegi, albeit a minor one and one which has left few traces in the final book version of the poem, and that is what Ruin and others have called the "déjà-vu" phenomenon. It is a phenomenon which is also inextricably related to the idea of "själavandring" or metempsychosis:

Through mental relaxation the imaginative process is promoted and it cannot surprise us if in the traces of the imaginative process that paradox emerges which is characteristic of the "déjà-vu phenomenon": on the one hand the knowledge that that which we confront has not been previously experienced by us, on the other hand the smile of recognition within us, yes, the whispering: you have seen that before!³⁵³

The importance of the "déjà-vu phenomenon" or "ätererinringstanke" for the conception of Målna is underlined by a marginal note to a series of annotations or plan for the poem: "It seems to me that I have experienced this before. Les très riches heures du duc de Berry." (Mig synes att jag upplevt detta förr. Les très riches heures du duc de Berry.)³⁵⁴ There can be little doubt that in the penumbra of Ekelöf's mind the lines of Strindberg's play Ett drömspel were present when he made this note:

The poet. It seems to me that I have experienced this before ...
 The daughter. Me too.
 The poet. Perhaps I've dreamt it?
 The daughter. Or written it, perhaps?
 The poet. Or written it.
 The daughter. Then you know what poetry is.
 The poet. Then I know what dreams are.
 The daughter. It seems to me that we stood somewhere else and said these words before.

The poet. Then you can quickly figure out what reality is!
 The daughter. Or dreams!
 The poet. Or poetry!³⁵⁵

A draft to a prose poem in Ekelöf's notebook G (1931-->) provides another example of his interest in the *déjà-vu* phenomenon:

I come from the far-away land. There I had a father and a mother.
 It seems to me so long ago. . . .

It must have been the first time I came to earth. Everything appeared so utterly strange, the roads always led far away, my eyes could not take notice of anything. I forgot everything for the sake of the new, the past for the sake of the future. Only now in memory is the past like a home.

I vaguely remember other worlds, I know that it is other worlds I remember. But that is seldom and so unclear. . . .³⁵⁶

Ekelöfian Animism and the Fascination with "Things"

If there is such a thing as a belief in metempsychosis whereby the apparent particularity or individuality of the various incarnations is cancelled by their underlying, essential identity, there is also a kind of "metempsychosis" which involves the essential unity or identity of animals, human beings and things and which one could call metamorphoses or transformations. The prelogical identification of a human being, for example, with animals (a totem for instance) or even "inanimate" objects is characteristic of the thought of so-called primitives and children and is a standard component of fairy tales. The split between subject and object, between the self and the external or outside world, that psychic distance characteristic of the rational thought of the adult, has little or no applicability in such experiential spheres as that of the "primitive" or the child. Indeed it is possible to view Rimbaud's "Le Bateau ivre" as just such a prelogical identi-

fication as we find in the "participation mystique" of the primitives and of children, for the "je" of the poem, the lyrical persona, is not the drunken boat metaphorically speaking but rather literally, just as the primitive in a religious rite is literally the moon. Ruin has stressed this similarity between the "participation mystique" of the primitive and the metamorphoses of the fairy tale or "saga" and has maintained that it rests on an underlying sense of the identity of all things:

We could also say: it is the same identification which underlies the transformations which in fairy tales suddenly strike both living and dead things and which we find again in the romantics when they have their flower or animal forms fall over human beings or, the other way around, have human beings free themselves from constraint into entirely different forms of existence.³⁵⁷

While Ruin has emphasized that the poet in general with his ability to lose himself in his images and become one with them is a Protean creature par excellence,³⁵⁸ his observations have particular applicability to En Mølna-Elegi. Metamorfoser where the fluid protagonist undergoes a series of metamorphoses. A general plan to Mølna emphasizes this aspect of the poem when it identifies the lyrical persona and the poet as "the Form-changer," "the Transforming One," "the Changing One," "the Poet-Transformation Artist." (Gestaltskiftaren, Gestaltskiftande, Den Sig Förvandlande, Skalden Förvandlingskonstnären). In folder 'j' we also read the note: "the metamorphosing Proteus" (den gestaltskiftande Proteus).

The fascination with "things" is a preoccupation which one can trace all the way through Ekelöf's production, from his early poems such as "blommorna sover i fönstret" (The Flowers Doze in the Window) in Sent på jorden to the more comic Lewis Carroll-H. C. Andersen-like animation of things in En Mølna-Elegi. The preoccupation is no isolated occurrence in

modern literature from Rilke's "Dinggedichte" to Sartre's La Nausée and Robbe-Grillet's novels. William Carlos Williams summarizes this modern preoccupation with things in the "Author's Note" to his open-form poem Paterson when he writes: "no ideas but in things." What seems to unite all these modern efforts to penetrate things is an awareness of the inadequacy of a mode of observation which engages in the pathetic fallacy or is teleological from a human point of view. The concentration in a poem such as "blommorna sover i fönstret" (to give a title to this untitled poem) is clearly on the "whatness" of things and on the epistemological questions which the very impenetrability and isolation of things from the comfortable, secure, utilitarian and teleological world of human language elicit.

Characteristic of Ekelöf's attitude towards things from the very earliest years is a kind of animism or pantheism, his awareness that things are alive but perhaps living at a different rhythm than human beings. As early as 1926 in a letter home to his mother Valborg Hahr (formerly Valborg Ekelöf), he calls himself "I, the pantheist and syncretist." (jag, panteisten och synkretisten.)³⁵⁹ Perhaps the clearest expression of Ekelöf's animism is given in one of the "Tänkedikter" (Reflective Poems) in Opus incertum:

The belief in an organic precedence
 a mystery between skin and skull
 a crucial point of creation--
 how that has made us limited!

Life has many methods
 from the firmament's fermentation
 to the tarn's
 and to the human brew's

What should I believe
 but that the stone also lives
 as it has changed
 even though its day is long

Let us not underrate life
 Let us not underestimate life
 by making it into a privilege
 only for us.³⁶⁰

In a draft to "Ett vildmarkskåseri" (A Wilderness Causerie), which was to become the essay "Zoologiska trädgårdar" (Zoological Gardens) in Promenader, this Ekelöfian animism once again becomes apparent: "The awfulness of the fact that the concept 'thing' ever arose! See life in everything, venerate everything! The animistic conception superior to the rationalistic. Poetry's to pragmatism's. Stagnelius' 'The Sign of Creation.'" (Det hemska i att begreppet ting någonsin uppkommit! Se liv i allt, värda allt! Den animistiska uppfattningen överlägsen gentemot den rationalistiska. Poesiens gentemot pragmatismens. Stagnelius kreaturens suckan.)³⁶¹

Ekelöf's own animism, his lack of belief in "an organic precedence / a mystery between skin and skull / a crucial point of creation" (ett organiskt försteg / ett mysterium mellan hud och dödskaalle / en skapelsens springande punkt), seems to underline his admiration for a writer such as H. C. Andersen, who has succeeded in retaining contact with the primitive's or child's animistic, prelogical view of the world and its objects:

H. C. [Andersen] mirrored himself in things. . . .

Every thing has symbolic value or rather: every thing is also a symbol, even when need arises the most simple ones.

H. C. Andersen was a remarkable scrap sculptor. He could get the simplest things to live and speak and he did not even need to weld or solder. The darning needle had certain views of her-

own through her own eye. What she was most afraid of and what irritated her the most, what she even threatened the world around her with half hysterically, was that she should break. She had no real security in the presence of the maid's fingers and the coarse materials, perhaps even leather footwear, into which she was used to being stuck. She was conscious of being of bad steel, cheap, common. Nonetheless destined for a demanding, all too demanding task. In Andersen this artifact tells us all this and the other dead things or "soulless" small animals also tell us a lot.

. . .

The fact is that Andersen's art rests on a deep magical foundation. He is a magician like the child or the savage. He conjures life into the simple object, without any aids. He does not have to run in electricity [elaktricitet: see note]. Who said that art has to be mobile. It is the artist who has to conjure up potential mobility. He who built the Parthenon was also a magician.³⁶²

In the capsule 'Tidiga manuskript' there is another commentary in which Ekelöf expresses the view that it is a fallacy to believe in a schism between the organic and the inorganic:

The theory that life has existed from all eternity is not sufficient, but rather we have to assume that everything is alive and that there is no "dead" matter. That disposes of the whole troublesome question of life's origins. I therefore do not believe in a distinction such as that between organic and inorganic chemistry, such that the one possesses something which the other lacks. Or that it is a product of something [;?] a link in a chain with which the other has nothing at all to do. But neither do I believe that one can produce life in laboratories and that for purely technical reasons. We find it entirely natural that inorganic life has existed eternally but we cannot conceive of organic life's having done so. . . .³⁶³

In a draft to an unpublished poem in his notebook AB (1957-58), Ekelöf also elaborates on his animistic philosophy, this time from the point of view of the humanness of things and more in the Oriental vein:

Title: Things and objects
trouvailles
where things are unwrought nature

things human

Things are nature
finds on the beach
shaped by the wind and
the water

Things are human
bear traces of the hand
which arranges or wears down

Corresponding to Ekelöf's conception of a fluid borderline between the human and the "inanimate," between the "inorganic" and the organic, is his capacity for seeing the human in the subhuman (objects, animals) and conversely for seeing human beings as objects. An example of the latter is his description of "la Femme-Tronc" in his "novell" "En bizarr historia" (A Bizarre Story) in Promenader och utflykter. One of the two protagonists of the story, an otherwise perfectly formed female who since she lacks, apparently congenitally, all four limbs is the main attraction of a Parisian circus, is portrayed in terms of a human still life:

There she sat, La Femme-Tronc, on a rickety pedestal with a lathed base, nearly resembling the hatrack of a modiste, though sturdier. She smiled at the spectators and there was something really cheerful and engaging in her smile. The remarkable and captivating thing about her did not actually seem to lie in the fact that she

was deformed but rather in the fact that she was despite everything so well-made. She was platinum blond and in her small, pretty face she had blue, playful eyes and a very red mouth. Her body was dressed in blue tights, deeply décolleté. The lack of arms and legs seemed to be completely atoned for by the perfect rounding of her contours, the shoulders were firm and well-formed, the rest of her body emerged from under the tight-fitting tights to the same advantage, only her hip area had as a result of continual sitting become rather sturdily developed. That made her resemble a pear where she sat, a beautiful French pear, just as naturally armless and legless as ever a pear can be. She was a kind of living object, yes, just that: an object --which one can put-place-lay on a chest of drawers, a table or wherever one wants it. A living object.³⁶⁴

If from one extreme the reification of human beings is, as Bergson claims in his famous treatise Le Rire, the source of comedy, at the other extreme the animation or "besjälände" of things is another.³⁶⁵ A Biedermeier sofa, a gable clock, an apple, a blind window and a window-mirror ("skvaller-spegel") which talk as in a fairy tale of H. C. Andersen or as in the works of Lewis Carroll: these are the sources of the comic in En Målna-Elegi. Ekelöf's interest in the anthropomorphizing of things is indicated by two series of notations, both of which seem to have considerable relevance as far as the farcical Lewis Carroll-like faerie of En Målna-Elegi is concerned. One of the general plans to the Elegy has the following note:

/ Tragic meaningful nonsense / Carroll / eternity's cardboard box
 the human chess pieces' conversation in the underworld's
 drawer--The chess pieces--

Another note from the period 1938-1940 furnishes another example of Ekelöf's interest in the idea of a fairy tale-like animation of things:

Project. Book of grotesques: Tale of Dürer's Melancholia. Fly for a day. All the way from melancholically strange prose poems to pure Falstaffian scenes. Baroque development of Andersen's fairy-tale technique, personification of impossible things, fairy-tale tone. It is all a question of tone: the melancholically marveling observation of anything whatever and the possibility of human action in it. Human-non-human. The comedy in the tragedy in everything. Work according to the principle Tale about the very first thing which occurs to one (a blanket, a deck of cards), put oneself in the blanket's-the deck of cards' situation if it were human and the human were fate.³⁶⁶

Underlying all the metamorphoses and metempsychoses of En Mölna-Elegi there is a sense of the fundamental essential identity of all things, be they animate or "inanimate." A note in folder 'a' to a draft of "La Brinvilliers" section of the Elegy, a draft which significantly enough contains the two lines "How can I tell whether my soul will have a voice / in a tree, in a flower, a blade of grass?" (vad vet jag om min själ får röst / i ett träd, i en blomma, ett gräs?), has the mystical note: "obs Eliot 82 / tat tvam asi" (NB. Eliot / tat tvam asi). The expression "tat tvam asi" (That art that) from the Chandogya Upanishad 6,12 has been interpreted as signifying the identity or final essence underlying all the apparently distinct forms or manifestations of the world; it is

die in der Chandogya-Upanischad . . . von Uddalaka Aruni seinem Sohn erteilte Belehrung, dass die unsichtbare Substanz in dem Kern der Frucht eines Feigenbaumes das Urschöpferische ist, aus dem der Baum erwuchs und auch alles andere hervorgegangen ist. Diese letzte Essenz, aus der die Welt besteht, ist auch mit dem Selbst (atman) aller Lebewesen identisch.³⁶⁷

A correlate of this oneness of things and beings as it manifests itself in the Elegy is the breakdown of the "unity of the personality" in the tradi-

tional sense, the splintering of human identity, somewhat comparable to the "personlighetsklyvning" (doubling of the personality) which is experienced in dreams and which Strindberg effectively renders in Ett drömspel; the personality becomes a mere "valplats" or battlefield for an endless number of elements vying with each other. The idea is of course no isolated one in Ekelöf's world view with its consistent conception of the personality as a microcosm, a universe in miniature. The "I" in this context becomes a mere arbitrary fiction: "Every person's content of people and worlds. He who experienced, experiences and reexperiences this is still [?] not one but several in one. Calls himself I, that is only a psychic geographical attribute." (Varje människas innehåll av människor o. världar. Den som upplevt, upplever och återupplever detta är än, icke en utan flera i en. Kallar sig jag, det är bara ett psykiskt geografiskt attribut.) It is no accident that we read in the same series of notes (folder 8j): "Versailles' mirror galleries" (Versailles spegelgallerier). A note in Cahier I (p. 60) reads: "It is like seeing one's self in two mirrors facing each other. An endless series of selves." (Det är som att se sig själv i två speglar som stå mitt emot varandra. En oändlig rad av själv.) This image of the "Self" seeing itself in endless repetition in mirrors turned towards each other, this theme of the infinite multiplicity of the Self, its Versailles selves (Versaillespersoner) as it is called in one manuscript note, also has its place in the Elegy in the lines spoken by Mega Alexander (31, 337-342):

Thus I unlatch the latches and unbolt the doors.

Thus in vain I step out of mirrors
into mirrors,

I myself see in endless mirror-series
how unalterably and far

I leer--

Thus we have also the "I" of the poem addressing himself as "you."

This capacity to stand outside the Self is curiously akin to what another mystic Henry David Thoreau writes in Walden:

With thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature. I may be either the driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it. I may be affected by a theatrical exhibition; on the other hand, I may not be affected by an actual event which appears to affect me much more. I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and reflections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it; and that is no more I than you. When the play, it may be the tragedy, of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he is concerned.³⁶⁸

The Rape-Abortion Motif; The Elegy as an Eliotian Postwar "Levnadsstämning"

Both Eliot's The Waste Land and Ekelöf's En Mölna-Elegi contain rape-abortion scenes either explicitly or in the form of indirect discourse. In the section "A Game of Chess" of Eliot's poem, the fluid voice of the poem, who at this point appears to be a kind of proletarian housewife, reports her friend Lil's attempt to abort a child, presumably the product of Albert's temporary leave from the war front and more the result of his uncontrollable, insatiable breeding instincts or perhaps even his violation of Lil than of any true "communion of souls" (lines 158-162):

taining the beginnings of a "Kvarnsång" (folder 'aktuellt') seems also to testify to Ekelöf's having had Eliot in mind, for in an otherwise Swedish text there is a line in English:

Angst and contraceptives Those brown pills
 Angst and colocyntn

While one cannot entirely rule out the possibility that Eliot may have been a significant impulse behind Ekelöf's conception of such a rape-abortion scene, the final version of the Mill Song bears scarcely any trace of such an impulse and Ekelöf in the notes to a first published version of the Mill Song (as "Death and the Maiden" [Döden och flickan] in Prisma, 1949) has stated that his greatest debt insofar as this scene is concerned is to a minor impressionistic scene in Bellman:

It [the scene] represents among other things a spin-house girl, not yet completely corrupted, in the 1700's and now, with a duenna or old aunt and accessories. The exclamation "Ah ça! ma chère" comes from a lesser impressionistic scene in Bellman, which takes place in one of the small rooms at Clas' Cornerhouse, where a few aristocratic good-for-nothings take an innocent country girl "on a table."³⁷¹

With respect to this particular scene in the Elegy and the related drafts it is more the tone of Eliot's depiction of the monotonous and bored life of petty office clerks and secretaries and of postwar disillusionment-- Eliot's own denial of the latter to the contrary--which appear to have been of interest to Ekelöf and perhaps an impulse, but hardly what one could call an influence, behind this section of En Målna-Elegi. In his obituary notice or "nekrolog" on T. S. Eliot Ekelöf stresses the fact that for him it was Eliot's capacity to express a postwar "levnadsstämning" which he sees as

the significant contribution of Eliot, the one which impressed itself on him:

Eliot was born in the same year as Katherine Mansfield and since I have just been reading her, I come to think of what a peculiar aptitude characteristic of the period both have, Eliot even more so, for giving us the mystique in an existence, an ever so trivial existence, by painting the surrounding things, the time of day, the air and the light in the room, by making the person into an invisible presence. . . .

Eliot's masterpiece is for me the mysteriously animated image he gave of the 20's, of the death-struggle of Victorianism, of the Angst, moral destitution and disintegration of the postwar period, that epoch-making social collapse. This was truly a primal experience and the Angst of our time, however justified it may be, has to be seen as a consequence of that which inspired it. One has done one's best to destroy this great poetic panorama--I am speaking not only of The Waste Land but just as much of the many poems before and after--by dissecting it and by attempting to locate all the hidden quotes and allusions, of which a good deal may very well be unconscious, at least at the moment of inspiration. One ought to read it as a life-mood [levnadsstämning], a life-frieze. It is always the puzzle which is original. . . .³⁷²

Some Recent Hypotheses of Influence by Ekelöf Critics

Like few other writers in Swedish literature, Ekelöf, perhaps because of his very prominence in Sweden but relative obscurity abroad, has been made into somewhat of a scapegoat for Swedish influence-scholars and analogical critics. In one unpublished commentary Ekelöf stresses the very absurdity of the notion that he could have been influenced by Eliot by pointing out the complete distinction in content which separates his work from that of Eliot:

The sum total of my légitime dēfense is as before that my poems do not contain, do not express the same thing as his [Eliot's] poems express or contain, and that with respect to the kind of time experiēce as well as to the nature of the artistic attitude and objectives; this is valid from a human, religious or if you like mystical standpoint, as well as with regard to the historical outlook and the moral complexion. . . .³⁷³

In another commentary in the same vein he speaks of "poets who 'sound alike,' have a 'similar tone of voice' or the like but whose texts aim at something completely different and whose solutions to problems or moral attitudes are quite alien to each other." (diktare som 'låter lika', har 'liknande tonfall' el. dyl. men vars texter syftar till något helt olika och vars problemlösningar eller moraliska ställningstaganden är alldeles främmande.)³⁷⁴ One can say of those critics who from a merely superficial textual similarity or similarity of tone infer--not usually further substantiated--possibilities of influence what Ekelöf himself has stated: "Then the assumption of influence is really serious--for the person who makes it." (Då är en förmodan om påverkan verkligen graverande--för den som gör den.)³⁷⁵ And yet it is remarkable with what flippancy and nonchalance critics, for the most part Swedish critics, have engaged in the "fallacy of similarity." A case in point is a fairly recent article by Lars Lindvall in the Svensk Litteraturtidskrift (1970) where the critic, after a rather summary comparison of a poem by Fernando Pessoa and Ekelöf's "Samothrake," nonchalantly draws the conclusion: "Without it being a question of a word-for-word transposition, the similarity is so great that one has every reason to reckon with influence." (Utan att det rör sig om transponering ord-för-ord är likheten så stor att man har all anledning att räkna med påverkan.)³⁷⁶ Needless to say we are dealing here with what Guillén has rightfully condemned as the fallacious, mechanical

concept of transfer, the mistaken conception that in cases of influence one is dealing with the mere transfer of elements from the work of the influencing writer to that of the influenced writer.³⁷⁷ Now it is undeniable that Pessoa is a significant European modernist but to my knowledge there is no mention of him in any of the Ekelöf texts which I have encountered and any possible influence would thus have to be "subliminal" in the highest degree.

Another unreflected intimation of "influence" is to be encountered in Pär Hellström's fine dissertation on Ekelöf, where, after having examined in some detail the animal symbolism of Ekelöf and its political-philosophical implications with a side view at the political philosophy of Henry David Thoreau, the author hastily concludes:

There is every reason to reckon with an influence from Thoreau as far as Ekelöf's high assessment of the untamed and violent in nature and man is concerned, an influence which becomes all the more plausible in view of the two writers' similar view of the negative factors in society's evolution and of the means of removing them.³⁷⁸

With regard to Hellström's claim of influence several things can be said. It is true that Ekelöf himself mentions Thoreau in the context of what he in Färjesång has called "the steps wild animal, cattle, purebred" (trappstegen vilddjur, boskap, rasdjur), in other words in the context of a kind of Rousseauesque tripartite view of human social evolution where, in a rather utopian perspective, a synthesis is envisaged between the positive wildness of the savage, primitive or untamed animal and the positive refinement of the "kulturmänniska" or civilized man:

It is the fine and the timid, the independent, the wild--not the rapaciously wild but rather just the wild element which can make a person into his own unique human being and no one else's, that wildness which Thoreau thought explains and clarifies what we desire and mean when we speak very indefinitely of "the good."³⁷⁹

Admittedly there are indeed remarkable similarities between Thoreau and Ekelöf on the philosophical and religious level. Reservations against the hypothesis of an influence of Thoreau on Ekelöf have to stand, however: I would refer the similarities in thought between Ekelöf and Thoreau rather to common sources in Oriental thought (Taoism and its political philosophy for one) and to the tradition of mysticism, the remarkable unity of which Ruin has given us many brilliant examples.

Such things as two authors' use of such Neoplatonic conceptions as metempsychosis or the "déjà-vu phenomenon" or their common reference to a particular philosophical or religious tradition such as mysticism can all be brought under the heading of what Ekelöf in his criticism of the whole concept of "influence" has labelled as "identifikationer" (identifications):

There are identifications, du déjà vu, "it seems to me that I have experienced this before" (the Dream Play) or Plato's ideas or Pythagoras' metempsychosis fantasies, which are not "loans" because those involved are pretty much equally good (poets, artists, musicians, ordinary people, animals etc.). . . .³⁸⁰

In fact it is only the possibility of reference to such "identifications" which Ekelöf with reservations is willing to admit in a criticism of the treatment which certain academics have conveyed upon him, here with reference to the tradition of mysticism:

I have had licentiate dissertations sent to me which at the end had long lists of the books read. This and that again I have read in order to understand E. [Ekelöf].

Not a third of these lists are known to me and not a fourth have I even read to any extent. A portion of course consisted of standard works in which the persons concerned procured information about the tradition to which I am seen as belonging: that of the mystics, subdivision the creedless and intellectual.³⁸¹

One final example shall serve to illustrate some of the hastiness and illogic which has characterized the critics' claims of Eliot's or of other writers' influence on Ekelöf. Marie Louise Ramnefalk in her 1974 dissertation on Ekelöf, Martinson and Vennberg as didactic poets has once again taken up the well-worn question of a possible influence of Eliot on Ekelöf and, while for the most part holding to the line of rebuttal set forth by Espmark in his BLM article of 1959, she does concede that Ekelöf must have been technically influenced by Eliot's use of blank verse. Further, in the context of a resuscitation of what appeared to be a moribund debate, Kjell Espmark himself, a recent entry into the Swedish Academy, has this to say in an important note in his significant book on Swedish poetry in the European tradition Sjålen i bild:

My early judgment in the essay "Ekelöf and Eliot, A Study about Ferry Song" [the 1959 BLM article] . . . probably needs certain revisions; today I would be more inclined to see certain impulses, concurrent with Chinese and Indian mysticism, from Eliot texts such as Ash-Wednesday and Burnt Norton. The objections against attributing decisive importance to East Coker remain, however.³⁸²

This cautious retrenchment of Espmark from his former aggressive defence of Ekelöf's originality seems significant; more important almost than this is the fact that he in the same note refers the reader to a review of Ramnefalk's

dissertation on three Swedish didactic poets by Karl Erik Lagerlöf in the Dagens Nyheter of 30 December 1974. Lagerlöf in his generally disparaging review of Ramnefalk's book directs a criticism against her general fidelity to the line set down by Espmark in his BLM article in the following terms:

Had Ramnefalk researched the question on her own, she would have been able to show that Espmark landed in the wrong lane, for there is a long letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Karl Vennberg from 1938 where Ekelöf at the request of Vennberg appraises an Eliot translation done by him [Vennberg]. Ekelöf at the time doesn't have access to his Eliot books, he explains, but--it turns out--that makes no difference. He knows long passages by heart. The letter is listed among the unpublished sources in the Vennberg catalogue.³⁸³

If Lagerlöf's claim is true, which I have not been able to verify, it would indeed be somewhat of a mark against the credibility of an Ekelöf who is perhaps a bit too eager to underline the distractedness of his own readings of Eliot in the retrospective commentaries and in the essay "Gallret" (The Bars) in Promenader och utflykter with its quote of an obsessive refrain from one of Fröding's poems can stress his own inability or indifference to learning poems by heart:

This and other random quotes and Lesefrüchte pass by me at times. Seldom or never do I remember completely a poem or a sentence. That is perhaps because I have not been able to endorse that many poems wholeheartedly. Usually there are only a few isolated words which I remember and which in their isolation seem to me to have a mystical tonal colour, sound and meaning. A kind of heavy and meaningless meaning: "The bars, the bars, the bars." As a sort of pastime I have reconstructed in memory the words which precede the concluding cadence of the verses; obviously I could not remember them and they seem to me also to be rather unimportant. It is the sound itself in this cadence, not the words

per se, which are meaningful and which represent the human situation. . . .³⁸⁴

Despite these concessions to Lagerlöf, the reservations against the logic of his argumentation remain: the fact that an author knows by heart certain of the works of a predecessor, even if that fact is an isolated occurrence in the experience of the author and has been concealed from the zealous influence-scholars always eager to uncover some "ultimate" proof of influence, can hardly be used as substantial proof of an actual influence having taken place. To formulate the matter rather exaggeratedly and to counter illogic with illogic: the French schoolboy knows long passages from La Fontaine by heart and yet one can scarcely maintain that he has been influenced by him.

Ekelöf's Reception of the Conservative Eliot; The History of Their Personal Contacts

With the ever increasing and unexamined repetition of claims of influence from Swedish critical quarters over the years, Ekelöf undoubtedly felt called upon to defend his own originality and to refute the notion that he was in any way a mere Eliot plagiarist or Eliot apprentice in the use of the quotation-allusion technique or blank verse. While his defence became increasingly more bitter and his evaluation of Eliot increasingly more negative, it is undeniable that his opinion of both Eliot's work and person during the 40's was generally positive. In a letter card to Bonniers from "Dorothy" (Lapland) dated 18 May 1941 he assesses, for example, East Coker and his translation of the poem in the following fashion: ". . . otherwise I think the poem will come across well in Swedish, and it contains thought-

provoking things." (. . . annars tror jag dikten blir bra på svenska, och den innehåller tankvärda saker.)³⁸⁵ In a letter of the same date to Georg Svensson (?) of Bonniers, Ekelöf writes of the same poem in terms directly opposed to those of his later repudiation of Eliot and even indicative of a certain affinity for the Anglo-American: "Otherwise the poem is splendid, I think, virile and defiant right down to its most Catholic passages. A part of its metaphysical profundity appeals to me personally very much." (Annars är dikten grann, tycker jag, viril och försvarsduglig ända in i sina mest katolska passager. En del av dess metafysiska djupsinne tilltalar mig mycket personligen.)³⁸⁶ Finally in an earlier letter of 6 May of the same year, Ekelöf qualifies the poem as "a very unconventional poem" (en mycket okonventionell dikt).³⁸⁷

On 14 April 1943 Georg Svensson wrote to Ekelöf, who at the time was still living in Dorotea, Lappland, requesting, apparently at the insistence or at the request of Eliot himself, that Ekelöf take on the translation of another of the Quartets, this time Little Gidding:

I also wonder if you would like to take upon yourself the translation of Eliot's last poem Little Gidding, which I have received from the writer. I'll put off sending it until I hear whether you think that you can undertake it. Eliot himself would be very glad if you did it, he has written.³⁸⁸

In all fairness to Ekelöf it has to be admitted here that already during this period of what seems to have been intensive Eliot studies, Eliot studies which Ekelöf, however, is careful to emphasize as not having been self-imposed but rather the result of an outside impetus, Ekelöf's acceptance of Eliot was not entirely unequivocal or unambivalent and there are intimations of a certain lack of affinity, at least as regards certain works of the Anglo-

American modernist. This is true in particular of the Quartet Little Gidding, for in an undated letter of response to Georg Svensson's request Ekelöf wrote:

I too received Little Gidding from Eliot, went through it and thought that it was hardly in the same class as East Coker and the others [the other Quartets]. My impressions are, however, cursory. I'll try to penetrate more into it and to give you a reply after Easter, when a bit of manuscript I hope ought also to be expected. In any case it is certainly easier to translate than The Dry Salvages, which was almost impossible.³⁸⁹

Since Ekelöf published translations of East Coker in its entirety and off sections of The Dry Salvages (in Vi [We] and Konstrevy) and in 1943 at least studied Little Gidding, as we have seen, with a view to translating it for Bonniers, his later (retrospective) claim in an unpublished and undated "influence" commentary to having read only two of the Quartets is surprising: either the inaccuracy is due to an oversight or the word "read" has to be understood in an extremely restricted sense, i.e. to study for the purpose of translation. In any case in accordance with his "valfrändskapsteori" (theory of translation-reading-criticism based on the need for an elective affinity with the object of study), Ekelöf in a letter of 5 May 1943 indicates his hesitations regarding a possible translation of Little Gidding: "As far as Eliot is concerned it is like this: I have read through the poem again and I must admit I feel it is a bit alien to me. I think it to a certain extent gives the effect of repetitiousness and fatigue." (Beträffande Eliot står saken så. Jag har läst igen dikten igen och känner mig nog lite främmande för den. Tycker den i viss mån verkar upprepning och trött.)³⁹⁰

The history of Ekelöf's contacts with Eliot is of course not complete without a brief examination of his personal contacts with the latter. An

unpublished commentary (capsule 'K') indicates that during the Second World War a fleeting meeting took place between Eliot, who had been flown to Sweden despite the German blockade of England, and Ekelöf, who in all haste had just finished work on the translations of Eliot's poems which had been commissioned by Bonniers to honour Eliot's arrival in Sweden (the "Collected Poems" of Eliot translated by Ekelöf and Ronald Bottrall and published in 1942):

The same day that E. [Eliot] arrived I took the night train back to Lappland and wasn't able to meet him [except for 5 minutes: Ingrid Ekelöf's addition in handwriting to the typescript copy]. On that same day the publishing company also succeeded in getting out the first copy of the book to be handed over to him at an opening cocktail party at Bottrall's; because of overwork etc. I had to forgo the rest.³⁹¹

In an earlier letter from the war years Ekelöf expressed a marked interest in the possibility of a personal contact with Eliot: "Oh yes, Johan [?] wrote and told about Eliot. Well, we'll perhaps get to meet him after the war." (Jo, Johan skrev och berättade om Eliot. Ja, honom kanske man får träffa efter kriget.)³⁹² Eliot's journey to Sweden in 1948 for the purpose of accepting the Nobel Prize in literature was the occasion of the first "extended" contact between the two; the experience is related in very positive terms in a letter from Ekelöf to his maternal aunt Hanna von Hedenberg, the descendent of one of Ekelöf's aristocratic ancestors, the fru Mont-Gentil of En Mölna-Elegi:

However I was in town for a dinner with Eliot, whom I "had on my right," that is to say it was a gentlemen's dinner party and he had the hostess as a table companion while I had him, a quiet, unpretentious and delightful man who chatted about Princeton,

the Oppenheimers, his old sisters, the English countryside etc. with Ulla Bonnier almost as if the world were as small (and big) as it actually is, as well as about "Practical Cats" with me.³⁹³

Ekelöf seems thus to have been very impressed by the great man Eliot's lack of pretentiousness, a characteristic which he again underlines in a letter to Kaj Bonnier following the above-mentioned dinner party: "But Eliot is of course so simple--at least on the surface--that I don't know how one could talk one's head off." (Men Eliot är ju så enkel--åtminstone på ytan--att jag inte vet hur man skulle kunna prata huvet av sig.)³⁹⁴ A far cry from Ekelöf's extremely negative appraisal of the more official Eliot, an Eliot whom Ekelöf has in mind when in several "influence" commentaries he speaks disparagingly of "the old men on a pedestal" (gubbarna på piedestal).

One final if indirect contact between Ekelöf and Eliot is worth mentioning. In the 50's English translations of Ekelöf's poetry were submitted through the intercession of Georg Svensson of Bonniers to Eliot at Faber and Faber with a view to publication. In his letter of refusal Eliot wrote to Georg Svensson:

I have kept the translation of Gunnar Ekelöf's poems longer than I should have done because I did not know how long you were to be away from Stockholm, and I imagined that on your return you would have plenty of other business on your hands. We have been through it fairly carefully, I and my colleague, and our conclusion is, I am sorry to say, that the translation does not strike us as distinguished enough in itself to justify us in making an offer for the book. I myself found the translation just good enough to be tantalising. I felt so often that I was reading a poem which, if I could read and appreciate in the original Swedish, I should enjoy very much. I am sorry that we cannot deal with them as it would give me pleasure to think that Ekelöf's work might become well-known in this country.³⁹⁵

Ekelöf, the former translator of Eliot and one who had done his share to make Eliot accessible in Sweden, must have been somewhat upset at this refusal of his own poetry, albeit in translation, for he wrote in his notebook Y (1953-->) in a draft of a letter to his English translator:

That's what has made me think, that perhaps my poetry does not make poetry in the English sense of the word or, maybe in the Eliot sense. Perhaps it ought to be more [in the light of another tradition] transposed or transfigured. But that would make the thing still more difficult to deem or redeem. Or he [Eliot: my brackets] is tired of it all, and, by the way, is he really interested in modern, and foreign, poetry except that of his own congenates, Pound, St. John Perse and others. Or finally, and I already felt this myself, with the growing of age, you get a film on your eyes and you turn backwards to your own sources and beginnings or to the classical poetry which you may have neglected. (Now there is this difference between E. and me: he likes Dante, I like Petrarca.) In this country, where poets rise like mushrooms after a rain, people often send me their books, but I confess that I seldom see anything in it. Oh, poetry and the making of poetry may be en vogue but it is a well in the Vaucluse. As I do not like Eliot's arid Purgatorio he may not like my well. I am a sensualist, he is a theologian.

If Ekelöf's reception of Eliot during the 30's and 40's seems to have been largely positive if not entirely free of ambivalence and criticism, with the years it evolved--one can assume to a great extent as a result of his distaste for the analogical critics who never tired of intoning the litany of his apprenticeship under Eliot--into a markedly negative view of Eliot. As late as 1948 in an article "Sagt om Eliot" (Said about Eliot) published in the journal Prisma, we encounter an Ekelöf eager to apologize for Eliot and his conservative religious orthodoxy; the essential thrust of Ekelöf's argumentation here is that Eliot has to be regarded as less of the radical

artistic modernist which he was not in Ekelöf's opinion and as more of a "radical conservative" who, somewhat along the lines of a Nietzsche, Alexander Hamilton, Alexis de Tocqueville or--Gunnar Ekelöf, engages in a critique of democracy, utopian liberalism and radicalism:

But I would think that even in other respects Eliot in a probably not incorrect sense of the insolubility of the problem which the West has tried for 150 years to solve on the lines of an often illusory freedom and voluntariness quite simply refuses to negotiate on the basis of the assumptions which liberalism has made into norms, because he regards them as postulates in the discussion and not as conditions for it. Then he would prefer to place himself under the authority of faith. For he does not believe in progress. And I wonder if it would not be useful for each and every one of us to scrutinize closely our own so-called radicalism. . . . Under such circumstances I am willing to view even Eliot's religiosity as a matter of taste, a phenomenon rather than something humanly aggravating. . . .

If one sees Eliot as a bit less of a modernist poet and as a bit more of a radical conservative, some of the annoying doubleness in our view of the man and his work disappears after all. A certain migraine-like sourness passes off.³⁹⁶

In the later negative phase of Ekelöf's reception of Eliot, it is no wonder that he focuses on the religious, cultural and political conservatism and dogmatism of Eliot, aspects of Eliot which have frequently alienated the more liberal critics and readers, and if he in retrospect is willing to admit an earlier admiration for Eliot it is for the early Eliot, the Eliot of The Waste Land, the Pruffrock poems and the poems prior to Ash-Wednesday, Four Quartets and the Christian cultural criticism. Representative of this stance is the fact that in a letter to Leif Sjöberg of 29 July 1966 Ekelöf points out that in one of the fragments of En Mölna-Elegi published separately in journal form he had included a line "Who is the third who walks always

besides you" from The Waste Land (line 359) as a part of his quotation mosaic but subsequently deleted the line in protest against the religious conservatism of Eliot once he became aware of its religious implications:

When I on closer examination learned that it was a question of Jesus revealing himself to the disciples at Emmaus (with all probability a false passage in support of the resurrection in the flesh), I deleted it. The one-legged, one-eyed or blind cripple who goes around in Dublin crying out at regular intervals "For God, king and country" is to me infinitely more likeable than "I'm a royalist, an Anglo-Catholic & a conservative." What falsity! One asks oneself.

By that I don't mean to say that I haven't been technically influenced or taught myself via Eliot. But his entire type, from St. Louis via Boston to London is deeply repugnant to me, as I very likely have been ditto to him. I in a positive pellet of elder pith, he in a negative.

I shall outlive this crank and his crank-society of prelates and bad professors.³⁹⁷

In this context, as already mentioned, it is the Eliot of the texts prior to Eliot's acknowledgement of his adherence to the Anglican church, that is prior to Ash-Wednesday and Four Quartets, which Ekelöf as it were reluctantly concedes as having been possible impulses behind his own work: "The fact remains that it is the lyrical poems + The Waste Land before the Quartets and the dramas which have had any significance for me at all." (Kvar står att det är de lyriska dikterna + The Waste Land före kvartett- och teater-tiden som alls haft någon betydelse för mig.)³⁹⁸ In a letter to Sjöberg Ekelöf once again expresses his distaste for and opposition to T. S. Eliot's religious dogmatism and political conservatism: "Apropos Linnér who was surprised at your not having mentioned Eliot in your article, I as a liberal believe that since he [Eliot] professed his adherence to the Anglo-Catholic

church, the monarchy etc., he is just as unmentionable as Joyce or Pound. I think that guy is a bit obtuse." (Vad beträffar Linnér som förvånade sig över att du i din artikel inte nämnde Eliot, så anser jag som liberal att sedan han har bekänt sig till anglo-katolska kyrkan, monarkin etc. är han precis lika onämbar som Joyce eller Pound. Jag tror den killen är trubbig.)³⁹⁹

In his obituary notice for Eliot written originally for Dagens Nyheter, Ekelöf again stresses his inability to identify himself with the "law-and-order man" (lagkarlen) Eliot and his religious and political conservatism. In that same article he expresses the view that Eliot fled to such a religious and political dogmatism and orthodoxy as a way out of his own fear of life and feelings of insecurity:

Perhaps T. S. Eliot had more sides than could be seen, but two aspects of his disposition were manifest: the poet and the law-and-order man. By "law-and-order man" I mean this: the person who judges according to certain rules of the game, the person who has felt the need to set up a code in order to be able to place a screen of straight lines over the curved lines and labyrinths of the world and of life. I don't believe it was out of an exaggerated sense of law and order that he wanted it that way; I believe rather that it was out of timorousness, weakness, a fear of life which could appear to be a negative attitude to life [Lebensfeindlichkeit].⁴⁰⁰

It is this same kind of Christian reaction (in both senses of the term) which the Swede condemns as a form of all too ready-made escapism in a section of "Ni krymplingar" ("You cripples") in Färjesång:

You cripples who grovelling reach for the mantle's hem:
 "A little, a little, O Lord, of your power,"
 so you beg and if you don't get you steal,
 you grab when he turns his back on you, cripples!

And in the concluding lines Ekelöf presents us with a stance which could function as representative of his entire religious attitude, which is one characterized by self-doubt and scepticism and resembles more the attitude of the existentialist thinker à la Kierkegaard, Sartre or Paul Tillich than it does the often facile religiosity of the orthodox churchgoer: "I saved myself as well as I could, / a leper, perhaps, but no cripple." (Jag frälste mig, så gott jag kunde, själv, / en spetälsk, gärna det, men ingen krympling.)

Ekelöf's image of Eliot has its distortions and he seems to have had little or no knowledge of or understanding for the difficulties and torments of Eliot's personal life, the personal life of a public writer plagued by a sense of having entered into an unwise marriage with Vivien Eliot, a gifted but mentally deranged woman addicted to ether-sniffing who he felt had ruined his career, a fact which made him long both in private and in poetic disguise for her death, preferably by water. Such at least is the image of Eliot's private life presented to us by Hugh Kenner in The Pound Era. In this context Kenner cites the importance of that little clause which comes at the end of Eliot's exposition of his theory of the "continual extinction of personality," his theory of impersonal poetry; the clause has been comfortably ignored by the New Critics when they developed their own critical approach along the lines of Eliot's criticism: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things."⁴⁰¹

One fact remains, however, and that is Ekelöf's assurance that his own highly personal religious vision, that of the "jungfru" or Virgin, despite

all the similarities it demonstrates with the general outlines of mysticism and Oriental religious thought was an original and undogmatic one and thus diametrically opposed to that of Eliot:

Of the two [Eliot and Ekelöf] I regard myself as the more original. [In the margin: Others can decide who is the most original.] While Eliot took to the prayer-book, I created a non-confessional "religious" life-philosophy through personal interpretation of an ancient Christian and pre-Christian myth. It is with reservations that I here employ the word "religious," since that brings to mind the church, sects and doctrines, and I am against that. But without a doubt my poetry is--religious, and perhaps it also preaches--but freedom.

But while E₁ [Eliot] proceeds from a retrospective cultural pessimism [conventionality in his attitude to life: Ekelöf's brackets] which comes close to defeatism, never abandoned a marked conservatism and finally "took to the prayer-book," that is to say turned towards a Christianity which is in the main theologically coloured and oriented, E₂ [Ekelöf] began with a reduction of all values in order to arrive at the poetic constants of language and thought-feeling and with them to build up a lyrical world which is in several respects personal. He has, it is true, experimented a great deal and above all, whether out of necessity (the necessity of having to write for money) or out of indifference to his own dignity . . .--not hesitated to publish a good deal which is ephemeral or immature and ought to have remained in the desk drawer. He has undergone crises, nearly comparable to periods of degradation, during which he has shown an attraction to, degenerated to a sentimental Nordic romanticism or a kind of broken and self-pitying prophetism. But he has also with a vision of life's conditions as a starting-point and with a post-Christian and pre-Christian myth as a vehicle created a personal, confessionless mysticism and in metaphors or Gedankenlyrik attempted to express the relationship between the physical and what we call the spiritual. And even if he has looked for support and points of comparison in earlier Oriental and pre-Christian or half-Christian mysticism, he

has found personal expressions for his view of life, a goal for life, and of intellectual intercourse with death.⁴⁰²

Ekelöf's pronounced aversion for Eliot's religious, political and cultural conservatism as it comes to the foreground in this and similar commentaries makes Hans Kuhn's statement in a review of Nelly Sachs' translations of Ekelöf poems to the effect that Ekelöf had been "zutiefst berührt . . . vom T. S. Eliot in 'The Waste Land' and 'Ash-Wednesday'"⁴⁰³ untenable, at least with respect to the latter work with its clearly religious thrust. It is the more so since Ekelöf in an unpublished commentary can claim: "I have no memory of Ash-Wednesday." (Ash-Wednesday har jag inget minne av.)⁴⁰⁴

Pound and Ekelöf; the Normative, Political Implications of "Influence" Hypotheses; Ekelöf's Concept of Anonymity and His Views on Originality

One point is worthy of mention in the context of Ekelöf's later marked distaste for the naturalized Englishman Eliot and that is his preference for the other two great men of "the Pound era," Ezra Pound himself and James Joyce, at the expense of the "old man on a pedestal" Eliot. In Dagens Nyheter of 20 June 1954 Ekelöf published a poem of identification with Ezra Pound ("O röst som kom till mig" [O Voice which Came to Me]), who at the time was still being detained as mentally deranged by the American authorities in an American mental institution. The poem was later incorporated into the collection Stroutnes (1955) but then subsequently eliminated from the poems of that collection which were taken up in the edition of Ekelöf's "Collected Poems," undoubtedly since Ekelöf felt it belonged to that category of "ephemeral and immature" verse which he mentions in the long commentary just cited and has more emotional significance than real artistic merit, but the

gesture of sympathy towards a Pound whose treatment by his own countrymen has to be qualified as one of the most barbaric events in modern cultural history is undeniable. It is also significant that Ekelöf in a letter of 1965 to the other members of the Swedish Academy proposed Pound as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature; the letter is couched in terms indicative of his reservations towards Pound's dubious political views--views which Hugh Kenner seems perhaps a bit too eager to apologize for or justify--but is marked by an obvious note of admiration for the artist Pound:

In comparison with what can be laid to the charge of such candidates, I think that Ezra Pound's guilt is light. A political idiot, a braggart and hyperindividualist and I venture to propose his name for next year. He was an impulsegiver, even in the 'ideal' sense, and will certainly come to mean more for subsequent generations than the other two [apparently Mikhail Sholokov and Pablo Neruda].⁴⁰⁵

As far as the form of En Målna-Elegi is concerned, with its systematic use of the quotation-allusion technique and of the open-form, one is dismayed to ascertain that no influence-scholar, at least not to my knowledge, has ever proposed the influence of Pound's Cantos on Ekelöf's long poem. In an ironic vein and as a stab at the illogic of the influence-critics, Ekelöf has himself suggested this neglect of Pound in connection with his name and supposed "influences": "And as far as the quotes go why have people not suspected Pound--of whom I have only 'read' the section 'Rock-Drill' and isolated poems [Cantos] in Lars Forsell's translation." (Och varför supponerar man när det gäller citaten inte Pound--av vilken jag 'läst' endast Section Rock-Drill och spridda dikter [Cantos] i översättning av Lars Forsell.)⁴⁰⁶ Ekelöf's French translator J. C. Lambert points, at least by implication, to the illogic of a neglect of Pound's work in connection with Ekelöf's supposed

influences when he in a letter of 8 September 1962 (?) writes:

Les novissimi Italiens, par exemple, sont très proches, par certains côtés, de la Mœlna Elegi, que j'ai fait découvrir à l'un d'eux, lors de son passage ici: Eduardo Sanguineti. Tu me comprendras si je te dis que les Italiens sont dans la descendance du Pound des "Cantos"⁴⁰⁷

The explanation for such a critical oversight among Swedish students of influence has to be the obvious one here: simply that Pound did not and does not have the prominence in Sweden that Eliot had. Eliot's influence on an entire generation of Swedish poets of the 30's and 40's can hardly be denied. Or to put the matter in Ekelöf's own terms: "Naturally people say that I am influenced by Eliot. Why? Because it is handiest to take the poet who is in the daily news." (Naturligtvis säger man att jag är påverkad av Eliot. Varför? För att det ligger närmast till hands att ta den diktare som är aktuell i dagspressen.)⁴⁰⁸ There can be little doubt that one is dealing with a strong polemical thrust against the Nobel Prize winner and public writer Eliot when Ekelöf writes: "I think there are two great failures in this century's Anglo-Saxon literature: Joyce and Pound. But these failures, these mutilated and unburied bodies are much greater than the old men on a pedestal." (Jag tycker det finns två stora misslyckanden i detta sekels anglosachiska litteratur: Joyce och Pound. Men dessa misslyckanden, dessa styckade och obegravda kroppar är mycket större än gubbarna på piedestal.)⁴⁰⁹ Or when he writes: "Both Pound and Joyce are progressive, inciting at least to contradiction. TSE is something as boring as a fixed star." (Så väl Pound som Joyce är progressiva, eggande åttn. till motsägelse. TSE är något så tråkigt som en stjärna fix.)⁴¹⁰

One of the sources of Ekelöf's later bitter rebuttal of claims of influ-

ence put forward by Swedish critics was undoubtedly the implied, unwritten and perhaps in extreme cases even unconscious assumption of such critics that the artist who influences is necessarily superior artistically to the one who is influenced. Such an unwritten but for the influenced writer extremely damaging view or value judgment is indeed a recent development in cultural history: one is hard put to imagine a music or cultural critic of the Baroque period who would have felt Johann Sebastian Bach to be any the lesser an artist for having been influenced by, having learned from or even having quoted his predecessors or contemporaries: Schütz, Biber, Albinoni, Buxtehude and Vivaldi. But in modern claims of influence the value judgment is always perniciously present or at least latent; the critic need not even imply it openly, for the reader of the criticism or of the hypothesis of influence can draw the conclusion for himself and is inevitably led to do so by modern conceptions of "originality." Such assumptions of the lesser originality of the influenced writer are all the easier to make when of the two artists in question one is a highly publicized, public writer and figure working in a "major" language, i.e. one of the great "kulturspråk" (civilized languages) such as English, French or German, the other an extremely brilliant but on the international level unknown writer working in a "minor" language such as Swedish. The temptation for Swedish critics to assume tacitly or imply such distinctions in artistic value as a part of more or less unsubstantiated claims of influence was and is always close at hand but is nonetheless somewhat of a paradox in that it was and is culturally self-defeating and unwittingly a contribution to cultural chauvinism.

One of the most important definitions of principle that Claudio Guillén makes in his brilliantly reasoned contributions to the understanding of the concept of influence is that the term, if it is to have any meaning at all,

has to be identified with or understood as the psychological impact of the work of one writer on another or more specifically on the actual genesis of the work of the influenced writer. Guillén has made the extremely important distinction between what he calls "artistic value" on the one hand and "influential value" or "effectiveness of impact" on the other.⁴¹¹ He has further emphasized that the inherent political implications of a failure to distinguish between these two concepts, that is between the mere ascertainment of a psychological impact of one writer on another or that which "influence" conceivably is and an unwritten value judgment, can lead students of influence to "become ratifiers of success, colonialism and international power--political historians in spite of themselves."⁴¹² Indeed such a confusion of values or lack of theoretical clarity in the case of Eliot-Ekelöf influence-adherents seems to lie behind and to have provoked such justified statements from Ekelöf's side as the following:

The dependence on E [Eliot] a kind of legend. If Rimbaud had lived and received the Nobel Prize, I would have been above all dependent on him. Now as a matter of fact I am in a number of poems from Dedication to [Grief and Stars--then stop and otherwise].--By Eliot I have never been influenced. Who ever thinks of regarding me as dependent on (influenced by) Södergran? No one, since Södergran is as good as no one in that market.⁴¹³

In other words to paraphrase Guillén to ascertain an influence is to constate a psychological fact, not to make or even imply decisions about artistic merit and superiority, and yet this is a distinction which influence-critics often lose sight of.

Ekelöf's resentment towards those who claimed that he was influenced by Eliot can be seen in the larger context of his distaste for the undeniable chauvinism and ethnocentricity of the "great" language spheres, in

particular the Anglo-Saxon. This distaste is at least implicit in his criticism of influence-scholars who by losing sight of the above-mentioned distinction between influence and artistic value have been ratifiers of success and cultural imperialism:

The incredible narrow-mindedness of literary historians and others who let themselves be hypnotized by the celebrities of the time and do not venture to assume the possibility of, or even read up for themselves [?] on the degree of originality of individuals of lesser linguistic diffusion, fame or repute. Their method is literally, reckoned according to the degree of celebrity, to kill flies with a hammer. But it can happen to be an unusual fly. As far as the hammer is concerned, it can be unconscious of the fact that it is being used for this purpose. If such a hammer could think, i.e. understood what it was a question of, understood for example the language, perhaps it would hit the proverbial village carpenter on his thumb. And the ugly fly would fly away.⁴¹⁴

For the "fly" of Ekelöf's comic comparison, that is for the original poet "of lesser linguistic diffusion, fame or repute," the inescapable monopoly of the great "kulturländer" (civilized countries) such as England and France must have been the source of inevitable frustrations:

How I detest the isolationism of the great languages and of the great power spheres! A reasonably well-educated Swede, Dane etc., Dutchman or Greek can speak comfortably 3 to 5 languages. An Anglo-Saxon or Frenchman is brought up in the belief that his cultural sphere and language is as good as the only one and murders the rest.⁴¹⁵

Ekelöf's same opposition to the cultural chauvinism of the great "kulturländer," a chauvinism from which he as a writer in a minor language stood to lose the most, becomes evident in an unpublished poem:

O what great minds have not
 soared over this
 flat Germany (Ekelund)
 Yes, and what noble popular minds
 over this unknown Sweden
 not even to speak of Finland far away under
 the stars
 People talk, as if there were a monopoly,
 only about Shakespeare, Racine,
 Goethe
 Give a coin to Stål^o
 Who are those who haven't exerted themselves for human/ity
 in Portugal, on the Salerno peninsula
 in the Principality Nichts zu machen
 or in the Earldom halfpenny worse
 I can only say, after ample
 experience,
 To those exiles I belong
 I adopt the creed of exile . . . 416

The paradox as far as Ekelöf's attitude towards the notion of "influence" is concerned is that an artist who essentially rejected the modern post-Romantic cult of originality, individuality and genius felt called upon in the face of the Eliot-aficionados to defend his artistic integrity by reference to just such a notion as "originality." Thus in a statement to Leif Sjöberg he can maintain: "I ask you to believe that I am in fact on the whole an original human being and that such influences don't have the importance that literature's (or life's) chiropractors imagine." (Jag ber dig tro att jag på det hela taget faktiskt är en originell människa och att sådana påverkningar inte har den betydelse som litteraturens (eller livets) kotknackare föreställer sig.)⁴¹⁷ From the point of view of the critics the paradox is that undoubtedly one of the most original and personal modern Swedish writers, one who has affected inalterably the development of the

Swedish literary language, was seen almost obsessively in the light of the influences which he was supposed to have undergone.

Far be it for Ekelöf to engage in the cult of genius or originality; in a statement from Blandade kort, for example, he deplores just such a cult of the personality as it manifests itself in our modern, official cultural institutions with their promotion of the cultural superstars and prize-winning artists: " . . . I wonder if with the aid of modern publicity the cult of the personality hasn't made itself at home in our literature. In reality it is an anonymous element which carries poetry into the future." (jag undrar om inte personlighetskulten med hjälp av den moderna reklamen gjort sig bred i vår litteratur. Det är i själva verket ett anonymt element som bär dikten vidare mot framtiden.)⁴¹⁸ At the same time, however, Ekelöf can insist on originality as a necessary condition for all art and like Marcel Proust in Le Temps retrouvé can reject the notion of a collectively produced art such as the "proletarian" art aspired to by certain political groups as absurd and unrealistic. This ability of Ekelöf to balance between the equally falsifying extremes of on the one hand individuality, originality and creatio ex nihilo, on the other hand the notion of a collectively produced art can perhaps best be seen in his criticism of Breton's advocacy of the latter:

That "poetry will (should) be made by all, not by one alone" (Breton) is an absurdity. But that "kulchure," however it is, is made by all in mutual interference is undeniable. I think that is a proposition that not even the genius Leonardo would have denied.

Culture, literary, musical, pictorial or whatever you would have, technical, is not made by "geniuses" but by all in interference. I can discover an invigorating word in one to whom I am indifferent. I can find a shocking platitude or extravagance in one for whom I have an affinity.⁴¹⁹

This same paradoxical movement between the extremes in Ekelöf's attitude towards originality and influence can be seen in a marginal note to a commentary in which Ekelöf criticizes the critics for having viewed Swedish writers exclusively as if they were mere "eftersägare" (parrots) of other more prominent European literary figures and their works as mere translations of other more prominent or well-known European works rather than for their own merits and on their own terms; the note reads: "No one uninfluenced, everyone original, essentially alone. Culture indivisible." (Ingen opåverkad alla originella, i gr. o. botten ensamma. Kulturen odelbar.)⁴²⁰ If "influence" becomes such a general and inescapable phenomenon in the generation of "kulchure" as Ekelöf seems to assume above, to the extent that no one is not influenced, the notion of influence then loses all meaning as a means of asserting the artistic superiority of one artist over another and ceases to be that unwritten value judgment into which it is so often, so unwittingly and so unfortunately corrupted.

If the contradiction between Ekelöf's equally weighed insistence on both the individual and the anonymous aspects of artistic production and the generation of culture is only apparent, this is because he refuses to see the individual artist working in isolation as necessarily unrepresentative of the universally human or on the other hand collectively produced art (such as the debatable notion of "proletarian art") as more representative of the generally human. In this he approaches the standpoint of a Schopenhauer who can insist on the necessity of self-knowledge, of knowledge of one's subjectivity as it functions in isolation, as the only means of gaining a knowledge of the objective world:

Überhaupt ist das Ding an sich auf dem Wege der rein objektiven Erkenntnis nimmermehr zu erreichen, da diese immer Vorstellung bleibt, als solche aber im Subjekt wurzelt und nie etwas von der

Vorstellung wirklich Verschiedenes liefern kann. Sondern nur dadurch kann man zum Dinge an sich gelangen, dass man die unmittelbare Erkenntnis, welche Jeder vom innern Wesen seiner eigenen leiblichen Erscheinung hat, auf die übrigen, lediglich in der objektiven Anschauung gegebenen Erscheinungen analogisch überträgt und so die Selbsterkenntnis als Schlüssel zur Erkenntnis des innern Wesens der Dinge, d. h. der Dinge an sich selbst, benutzt. Zu dieser also kann man nur gelangen auf einem von der rein objektiven Erkenntnis ganz verschiedenen Wege, indem man das Selbstbewusstsein zum Auslegen des Bewusstseins anderer Dinge macht. Dies ist der allein rechte Weg, die enge Pforte zur Wahrheit.⁴²¹

The individual in isolation as analogous to or representative of the universally human (det allmänskliga): I think this is the meaning of such lapidary notes of Ekelöf as: "The vertical way. / The only one which is open to man" (Den vertikala vägen. / Den enda som står människan öppen)⁴²² or "the 'solitary' man' is just as collective / though perhaps a little more concerned about 'the flame.'" (den 'ensamme' är lika kollektiv / fast kanske lite mera mån om 'lågan'.)⁴²³ If what appeared on preliminary examination to be a contradiction between a limitation to the self in isolation and the movement towards the universally human is resolved, it is by virtue of a correspondence between the microcosm of the individual or subject and the macrocosm which is the external, objective world, unknowable by direct means. Thus it is possible to view Ekelöf's attitude towards originality, individuality and influence in terms of his microcosm-macrocosm speculation. Once again Schopenhauer is illuminating:

Das Wesen an sich des Menschen kann nur im Verein mit dem Wesen an sich aller Dinge, also der Welt, verstanden werden. Mikrokosmos und Makrokosmos erläutern sich nämlich gegenseitig, wobei sie also im Wesentlichen das Selbe sich ergeben. . . . In jedem Einzel-

nen erscheint der ganze ungeteilte Wille zum Leben, das Wesen an sich, und der Mikrokosmos ist dem Makrokosmos gleich. . . . Jeder findet sich selbst als diesen Willen, in welchem das innere Wesen der Welt besteht, so wie er sich auch als das erkennende Subjekt findet, dessen Vorstellung die ganze Welt ist, welche insofern nur in Bezug auf sein Bewusstsein, als deren notwendigen Träger, ein Dasein hat. Jeder ist also in diesem doppelten Betracht die ganze Welt selbst, der Mikrokosmos findet beide Seiten derselben ganz und vollständig in sich selbst. Und was er so als sein eigenes Wesen erkennt, dasselbe erschöpft auch das Wesen der ganzen Welt, des Makrokosmos. . . .⁴²⁴

Conclusion

The history of the Eliot-Ekelöf relationship presents the critic with the unique case in literary history not only of an extended influence-controversy which has yet to be resolved but also with the case of a major writer working in a minor language who is also a brilliant and witty theoretician "in eigener Sache" and has contributed valuable personal commentaries on his own relationship with his "influencing" predecessor and on the entire concept of influence and influence studies. The history of Ekelöf's supposed dependency on Eliot can, I think, be divided into the following not exclusive areas: 1) the history of the question of Eliot's influence on Ekelöf in critical circles; 2) Ekelöf's reception of Eliot's work; 3) Ekelöf's attitude towards the concept of "influence" and his revision of the literary process in terms of a new 'Fragestellung' (parallelisms, common sources, conventions and "identifications"); 4) his view of his relationship, i.e. eventual dependency on Eliot; 5) textual similarities which could conceivably be used in support of the Eliot-Ekelöf influence hypothesis. A few short remarks can be made with respect to my treatment of these various, needless to say overlapping

aspects of the problem. My aim has not been to "solve" the problem of Eliot's possible influence on Ekelöf and I doubt whether such a solution is even conceivable. My purpose rather has been to elucidate some of the theoretical difficulties connected with the problem by drawing heavily on Ekelöf's own commentaries and by more or less detailed analyses of various influence hypotheses put forward by previous critics. A positive reception of a particular writer is undoubtedly a prerequisite or condition for allowing oneself to be influenced by that writer, unless of course one wants to draw on the extremely dubious concept of "negative influence." I have therefore attempted to sketch the general outlines of Ekelöf's reception of Eliot and to determine to what extent his later, openly negative attitude towards Eliot was the result of a "retrospective distortion." I have intentionally bypassed the larger but important issue of Eliot's reception in Sweden and have only touched on it, if at all, peripherally. To my knowledge one has yet to encounter a systematic examination of this event of literary history but such a study would without a doubt shed considerable light on Ekelöf's own attitude towards and possible use of Eliot. Ekelöf's own views on what influence he may have undergone as far as Eliot is concerned is admittedly clouded by a certain ambiguity: on the one hand he makes such extremely cautious, tentative statements to the effect that he may have undergone "a possible but not decisive, technical influence" (en möjlig men inte avgörande teknisk, hantverklig påverkan)⁴²⁵ with respect to Eliot, on the other hand and especially during the last years of his life, that is during the 60's, he can be found to make categorical rebuttals of all claims of having ever been influenced by Eliot: "By E [Eliot] I have never been influenced." (Av E har jag aldrig varit influerad.) I can provide no explanation of this curious indecisiveness except to view it as a concession made by Ekelöf to

the influence-scholars perhaps as a result of his own awareness that a conciliatory attitude in certain instances towards the whole topic was his best defence. In this context I think that one has to give Ekelöf credit for having attempted to see the critics' side of the matter and for having carefully weighed the pro and contra of a possible Eliot influence.

I have to express my doubts as to the validity, viability and applicability of Bloom's concept of "anxiety of influence": to me it smacks too much of the innocent accused who is assumed guilty until proven innocent or whose very protests of innocence are systematically taken to be proofs of--guilt. I have allowed myself to be heavily influenced by such fine theoreticians on the topic of influence as Göran Hermerén, Claudio Guillén and--Gunnar Ekelöf. My concept of "influence" for the most part holds close to that of Guillén and I see "influence" as above all a psychological impulse or "genetic incitation" to use Guillén's term, an impulse which may or may not bear fruit in the form of textual similarities such as similar thematic material or use of the same artistic or poetic techniques. I may be reproached for not having given a comprehensive and consistent "theory of influence" but I see that as the task of a theoretician of the brilliance of a Guillén and have to regard the complete feasibility of such a project with a certain amount of scepticism: the concept of influence is and will remain fluid and elusive and yet I can see no reason for abandoning this useful concept entirely. That would also have meant that I would have had to avoid the confrontation with the Eliot-Ekelöf controversy entirely. I have avoided the dangerous but important question of a possible influence of Eliot's blank verse on Ekelöf's poetry, in other words of a poetic technique which allowed Eliot to lend prose the dignity of poetry, not only because I felt myself incompetent to deal with the question but also since I felt that a "mere" technical

apprenticeship such as that could in no way be or have been a significant influence as long as it is or was not coupled with an influence in content, in "livshållning." There is some license to make such a detour around the possibility of an exclusively technical influence of Eliot on Ekelöf not only in Ekelöf's statements to the effect that "my poems do not contain, do not express the same thing as his [Eliot's] poems express or contain, and that with respect to the kind of time experience as well as to the nature of the artistic attitude, is valid from a human, religious or if you like mystical standpoint"⁴²⁶ but also in such statements as: "If the criteria of content aren't sufficient in this case [i.e. to make or refute decisions about possible claims of influence], then that means that one regards technical details as more decisive, which is absurd." (Räcker inte de innehållsliga kriterierna i detta fall så betyder det att man anser tekniska detaljer mera utslagsgivande, vilket är absurt.)⁴²⁷ Contradictorily enough, I have found myself involved in the examination of possible analogies, homologies and textual or thematic similarities between the works of Eliot and those of Ekelöf with a view to uncovering possible influences but my defence here has to be that one has to examine if one is to refute or accept. The "fallacy of similarity" I have seen, however, as the principal trap of the influence-scholars. Such superficial impressions of similarity have unfortunately all too frequently been made the foundation of claims of influence, claims which like it or not have been viewed as a reduction of the stature of the "influenced" writer. My bias is obvious: I believe the poet and not the critic should have the last word. It is unfortunate that so little has been written about the true influences on Ekelöf, influences which he was the first to admit and with gratitude, influences such as the abstract art of the Paris of the 20's, the music of Stravinsky and the works of such writers as Ekelund, Södergran and Strindberg. Instead all too much energy has been expended on

emphasizing the importance of the relationship between Ekelöf and Eliot.

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Notes:

¹ Unless otherwise indicated references to Gunnar Ekelöf's letters, notebooks and manuscripts are to the material in the uncatalogued Gunnar Ekelöf collection, Rare Books and Manuscript Section, Uppsala University Library. The material has been roughly ordered according to the author's various poetry collections and has been placed in various 'kapslar' (capsules) or heavy cardboard boxes, one of which contains nearly all of the material relating to En Mölna-Elegi. The 'Mölna-Elegi' capsule is in turn divided into various folders corresponding more or less to the various sections of the poem. To facilitate access to the references, I have given some indication of the various folders (for example folder 'j'), although this is not normally done in Ekelöf research. Ekelöf's notebooks are kept in three capsules of notebooks, designated A-N, O-AD and AE-AY. The dating of these notebooks, where available, is Ekelöf's own and was done in 1962, to judge from a copy of a register in the first capsule. Where possible references to the material in the Gunnar Ekelöf collection have been given parenthetically in the text.

² Marginal note in Ekelöf's handwriting, the author's own annotated copy of En Mölna-Elegi in the possession of fru Ingrid Ekelöf, Sigtuna.

³ Carl Fehrman, Diktaren och de skapande ögonblicken (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1974), p. 101.

⁴ Gunnar Ekelöf, Promenader och utflykter (1941, 1947, 1958; rept. Stockholm: Bonniers, 1963), p. 175. See also Pär Hellström, Livskänsla och självutplåning, p. 262. Hellström cites the following comment made by Ekelöf in an interview with Matts Rying in 1950: "I'm not a born writer; I'm no occasional poet, nature poet, but rather a work poet. From the very first I've worked with heaps of drafts. I begin with a sketch and then elaborate on it in all possible directions until I become so sick of it that I cut it down to the smallest possible proportions. A Mölna Elegy on the other hand has stretched itself out like a rubber band: at first it was only three lines." [Jag är inte född till att skriva, jag är ingen tillfällighetsdiktare, natur-

poet, utan arbetspoet. Andå från början har jag arbetat med massor av koncept. Jag börjar med en skiss och arbetar sen ut den åt alla möjliga håll tills jag blir så led på den att jag drar ihop den till det minsta möjliga. Men Mölna-Elegin har sträckt på sig som en gummisnodd: den var från början tre rader.]

⁵ Pär Hellström, Livskänsla och självutplåning (Uppsala: Lundequist-ska Bokhandeln, 1976), p. 12.

⁶ References to particular lines of En Mölna-Elegi are given in the text parenthetically, the first number referring to the pagination of the unnumbered 1960 Bonniers edition in Swedish, the second to the line numbers in Leif Sjöberg's-Muriel Rukeyser's English translation of the work in Comparative Criticism. A Yearbook. I. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 215-269. Where available translations of other poems of Gunnar Ekelöf have been taken from Gunnar Ekelöf, Songs of Something Else, trans. Leonard Nathan and James Larson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). The original Swedish text of shorter quotes is given parenthetically in the text; the Swedish equivalents of longer, indented quotes is given in the Appendix with page numbers corresponding to the page number where the English translation begins in the text. The translation of the Swedish titles is given parenthetically when they first occur; thereafter in the Swedish original. Punctuation of the titles in translation (underlining or inverted commas) indicates that the work in question is available in English in more or less "official" translations. Unless indicated in the Appendix, however, all translations from the Swedish except for those from En Mölna-Elegi are my own.

⁷ Leif Sjöberg, A Reader's Guide to Gunnar Ekelöf's A Mölna Elegy (New York: Twayne, 1973), pp. 66-67.

⁸ Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy of Ekelöf's own commentary to the poem "Samothrake" in a letter to two "gymnasister" ('gymnasium' pupils) from Karlskrona, dated 6 April 1967, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'

⁹ Gaston Bachelard, L'Eau et les rêves (Paris: J. Corti, 1942), p. 108.

¹⁰ Gunnar Tideström, "Samothrake," in Lyrisk tidsspegel (Lund: Gleerups, 1960), pp. 239-254. The essay was first published in 1947.

¹¹ Ekelöf's "Samothrake" commentary. See note 8.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Tideström, "Samothrake," p. 246.

- 14 Ekelöf's "Samothrake" commentary.
- 15 Goethe, Faust I, lines 11936-11937.
- 16 Kjell Espmark, Själén i bild (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1977), p. 160.
- 17 Gunnar Ekelöf, "Noter," sent på jorden med Appendix 1962 och En natt vid horisonten 1930-1932 (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1962), p. 172.
- 18 Erik Mesterton, "'En eld som brinner i allas ansikten.' Poesi och verklighet i en Ekelöf dikt," Bonniers Litterära Magasin, no. 2 (1981), p. 97.
- 19 Capsule 'En Mölna-Elegi.' To avoid monotony I refer to the poem alternatively as "Mölna" or "the Elegy." Given the extremely erratic spelling of the work--by critics as well as by Gunnar and Ingrid Ekelöf themselves--, I have opted for the spelling En Mölna-Elegi.
- 20 Anteckningsbok F (1931-->).
- 21 Carl Fehrman, Diktaren och de skapande ögonblicken, p. 108.
- 22 Lars Gustafsson, ed., Svensk dikt (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1978), p. 448.
- 23 Anteckningsbok AC (1959-1961).
- 24 Reidar Ekner, I den havandes liv (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1967), p. 45.
- 25 Anteckningsbok I (1935).
- 26 Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv, Stockholm.
- 27 Christian Kellerer, Objet trouvé und Surrealismus (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968), p. 43.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., pp. 44-45.
- 30 Gunnar Brandell, Från första världskriget till 1950, Vol. II of Gunnar Brandell och Jan Stenkvist, Svensk litteratur 1870-1970 (Stockholm: Aldus, 1975), p. 213.
- 31 Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy of Ekelöf's notes to the draft of an article published by Leif Sjöberg on En Mölna-Elegi in the Germanic Review of March 1965 (see bibliography). The copy is in the possession of fru Ingrid Ekelöf. Ekelöf's commentary is in English.
- 32 Ekelöf, Promenader och utflykter, p. 36.
- 33 Gunnar Ekelöf, En röst, ed. Ingrid Ekelöf (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1973), p. 73.
- 34 Ekelöf, "Några dikter av Petronius," an unpublished Petronius commentary, MS, capsule 'Översättningar.'

- 35 Hans Mayer, Aussenseiter (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 317-318.
- 36 Cited in Sverker Ek, "'Auditivt fokus,'" in Lyrik i tid och otid (Lund, 1971), p. 215.
- 37 Ross Shideler, Voices Under the Ground (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 18.
- 38 Cahier I (1930) in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 39 Anteckningsbok Q (1940-->).
- 40 See Sjöberg, A Reader's Guide, and Ek, pp. 215-216.
- 41 Folder marked 'överst,' capsule 'En Mölna-Elegi.'
- 42 The title "Strountes" is virtually untranslatable, although it has been rendered into English as "Rubbish" or "Nonsense." It plays on the Swedish word "strunt" (rubbish, trash) but has a Gallicizing '-ou' which is entirely un-Swedish.
- 43 Anteckningsbok AW (1964).
- 44 See also Josef B. Michl, "Gunnar Ekelöf og Franz Kafka," Svensk Litteraturtidskrift, årg. 1970, 1, p. 23. Michl's article hardly goes beyond the notation of Ekelöf's quotation of Kafka's diary entry and of the Swede's commentary and does not connect the two with the time speculation in En Mölna-Elegi.
- 45 Gunnar Ekelöf, Lägga patience, ed. Reidar Ekner. (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1969), p. 159.
- 46 Cahier I, p. 13 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.
- 47 One of the two notebooks containing variants to Skärvor av en diktsamling, capsule 'Tidiga manuskript' (1927-->).
- 48 Anteckningsbok K (<--1937-->).
- 49 Hans Ruin, Poesiens mystik, 2nd ed. (Lund, Gleerups, 1960), p. 193.
- 50 Hermann Diels, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 11th ed., ed. Walter Kranz (Zürich-Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964), I, p. 170.
- 51 Cited in Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics (London: Fontana, 1975), p. 187.
- 52 Ruin, pp. 191-192.
- 53 Ekelöf's notes to an article draft of Leif Sjöberg, in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy (see note 31). As a further example of the mystic's idea of stationary movement, one can cite Henry David Thoreau, Walden

(New York: New American Library, 1960), p. 71: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink in it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains." In the Isa Upanishad we read of the Spirit: "He moves, and he moves not." [The Upanishads, trans. Juan Mascaró (London: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 49]

54 Ruin, p. 373.

55 Ibid., p. 163.

56 Anteckningsbok AC (1959-1961).

57 Reidar Ekner, "Gunnar Ekelöf: Panthoidens sång," in Reidar Ekner and Orjan Lindenberger, Att läsa poesi (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1955), note, p. 135.

58 See Bengt Landgren, Ensamheten, döden och drömmarna (Lund: Läromedelsförlagen, 1971), pp. 84-85; and André Breton, Manifeste du surréalisme (Paris: Editions Kra, 1929), p. 67.

59 See for example Sjöberg, A Reader's Guide, pp. 124-125.

60 Promenader och utflykter, p. 12.

61 Cf. Landgren, p. 82.

62 From a letter of November 1966 from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg containing a commentary to Sjöberg's draft of an article on two poems by Ekelöf (see Bibliography), Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

63 Henri Bergson, Matière et mémoire in Oeuvres (1896; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p. 295.

64 Ibid.

65 August Strindberg, Skrifter, ed. Gunnar Brandell (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1962), XI, p. 378.

66 Carl Fehrman, Poesi och parodi (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1957), p. 84.

67 August Strindberg, 'Inferno,' 'Alone' and Other Writings, trans. Evert Sprinchorn (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1968), pp. 273-274.

68 Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Bantam Books, 1958), pp. 61-62.

69 Promenader och utflykter, p. 192.

70 Gottfried Benn, Gesammelte Werke in vier Bänden (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1960), III, p. 25.

71 Ek, pp. 207-208.

72 Folder 'Överst,' capsule 'En Mölna-Elegi.' The term "levnads-

stämning" (Lebensstimmung or life-mood) is one which Ekelöf uses frequently in connection with the Elegy but for which there is no exact English equivalent; the term refers to the particular psychic situation of an individual as it is influenced by the general social and political climate of the time and as it manifests itself in the things which surround him.

73 Folder 'c,' capsule 'Mölna.'

74 Folder 'j,' capsule 'Mölna.' A letter from Ekelöf to his mother from Dorotea (Lappland) dated 13 May 1942 (Gunnar Ekelöf collection) furnishes another example of the poet's attitude towards the Nazis and Germany: "As far as Europe and the world are concerned, the fact that one can still hope to see Germany and its gang destroyed and flattened in a few years keeps one afloat--whatever comes after that. The peace will be just as exciting as the war. But a nation which accepts bandits and murderers as its leaders deserves even more, even if, taken person by person, it appears just as congenial or uncongenial as any other nation. It is politically and humanly underage and ought to be treated as such." [Vad Europa och världen beträffar håller det en ändå uppe att man kan hoppas få se Tyskland och dess anhang i grunden förstört och tillplattat om några år--vad sedan därefter måste komma. Freden blir nog lika spännande som kriget. Men ett folk som accepterar banditer och mördare som sina ledare är vårt bättre, även om det, taget människa för människa, kan förefalla lika sympatiskt eller osympatiskt som många andra. Det är politiskt--och mänskligt--omyndigt och bör behandlas som sådant.]

75 Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Kaj Bonnier from Hölö, dated 7 December 1948.

78 Ibid., letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Kaj Bonnier from Hölö, dated 29 June 1949.

79 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Dr. Lennart Josephson from Rimbo, dated 12 June 1956, Ord och Bilds brevsamling 1951-1967, Uppsala University Library.

80 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Bonniers from Krokek, dated 29 June 1958, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.

81 Hellström, p. 225.

82 Ek, p. 206.

83 Cf. note to line 218 of The Waste Land: "Tiresias, although a mere

spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem. . . ." Apropos Eliot's retrospective disavowal of The Waste Land as chaotic and formless, one can cite his statement in an interview for the Paris Review [Writers at Work (New York, Viking Press, 1963), p. 105]: "In The Waste Land, I wasn't even bothering whether I understood what I was saying."

⁸⁴ Letter from Ingrid Ekelöf to Hanna von Hedenberg, dated 22 August 1959, Gunnar Ekelöf collection. Also cited in Hellström, p. 226.

⁸⁵ Letter from Ingrid Ekelöf to Gunnar Ekelöf's mother from Sigtuna, dated May 1960, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

⁸⁶ Letter from Ingrid Ekelöf to Hanna von Hedenberg, dated 1960(?), Gunnar Ekelöf collection. Also cited in Hellström, p. 227.

⁸⁷ Letter from Ingrid Ekelöf to Gunnar Ekelöf's mother, dated 28 August 1960, Gunnar Ekelöf collection. Also cited in Hellström, p. 227.

⁸⁸ Letter from Ingrid Ekelöf to Frida Flodquist from Sigtuna, dated 28 August 1960, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

⁸⁹ Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Gerard Bonnier, dated 16 August 1960, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.

⁹⁰ Fehrman, Diktaren och de skapande ögonblicken, p. 101.

⁹¹ Paul Valéry, Oeuvres (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), II, p. 553. In his "A Poet's Notebook," Valéry writes: "The habit of long labor at poetry has accustomed me to consider all speech and all writing as work in progress that can nearly always be taken up again and altered; and I consider work itself as having its own value, generally much superior to that which the crowd attaches only to the product."

No doubt the product is the thing that lasts and has, or should have, a meaning of itself and an independent existence; but the acts from which it proceeds, in so far as they react on their author, form within him another product, which is a man more skillful and more in possession of his domain of memory.

A work is never necessarily finished, for he who made it is never complete, and the power and agility he has drawn from it confer on him just the

power to improve it, and so on. . . . [Paul Valéry, Collected Works of Paul Valéry (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), p. 177].

- 92 Ruin, p. 132.
- 93 Cited in Hellström, p. 271.
- 94 Landgren, p. 304.
- 95 Anteckningsbok AW (1964-->).
- 96 Kladdbok 2, capsule Kladdbok 1-3.
- 97 George Steiner, After Babel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 296-297.
- 98 Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.
- 99 Ekelöf's annotated copy of En Mölna-Elegi.
- 100 A plan (apparently for Mölna) with the heading "Episk dikt," folder 'c,' capsule 'Mölna.'
- 101 Quoted in Landgren, p. 96.
- 102 Ruin, pp. 218-219.
- 103 Lägga patience, p. 159.
- 104 Arthur Rimbaud, Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 252. Ekelöf cites Rimbaud's statement in an essay "Konsten och livet," BLM, årg. 3 (1934), 8, p. 60.
- 105 Ibid., p. 252.
- 106 Gunnar Ekelöf, Edith Södergran studier, in Svenska Akademiens handlingar, 75. delen (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1968), pp. *13-17.
- 107 Ibid., p. *13.
- 108 Lägga patience, p. 47.
- 109 Letter from Rabbe Enckell to Gunnar Ekelöf from Grankulla, Finland, dated 25 February 1933, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 110 Cahier I, p. 35 (from the back cover) in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.
- 111 Folder 'a,' capsule 'Mölna.'
- 112 Gunnar Ekelöf, rev. of Dagbok öfver en Ostindisk Resa, by Pehr Osbeck, BLM, årg. 11 (1942), 7, p. 541.
- 113 Ekelöf, Edith Södergran studier, p. *18.
- 114 Kladdbok 3, capsule Kladdbok 1-3.
- 115 Cahier I, pp. 16-17. Hellström cites the continuation of this passage in his dissertation, p. 273.

- 116 Typescript copy of letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 10 November 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 117 T. S. Eliot, Preface (1930) to Anabasis, by St.-John Perse, trans. T. S. Eliot (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), p. 10.
- 118 Ek, pp. 201-202.
- 119 In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot writes, for example, that "the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" [T. S. Eliot, Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 23].
- 120 Ekner, I den havandes liv, p. 58.
- 121 Manuscript note to Bonniers regarding the publication of Ekelöf's collected poems, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 122 Ruin, p. 172.
- 123 Typescript copy of letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to fru Gemma Snellman of AB Rabén & Sjögren, dated 25 September 1965, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 124 Gunnar Ekelöf, "Bibliografisk efterskrift och Förord," sent på jorden med Appendix 1962 och En natt vid horisonten 1930-1932, p. 170.
- 125 Tideström, "Samothrake," pp. 251-252.
- 126 In the important essay "Självsyn" in Blandade kort, where Ekelöf defends himself against the charge of being Eliot-influenced, he has written of the quotation-allusion method: "As far as in particular the quotation-allusion method in Non serviam and A Mölna Elegy is concerned, which will probably come to be seen as especially inspired by Eliot, it is in the first place an ancient method which not only a Petronius, a Dante, indeed a Rabelais or in our time a Joyce have applied but also a vast number of "hermetic," symbolist and mystic poets, obviously in such a way that each sang the song in his own way" (p. 169). [Vad nu särskilt allusions- och citatmetoden i Non serviam och En Mölna-Elegi beträffar, som väl kommer att anses speciellt inspirerad av Eliot, så är det för det första en urgammal metod, tillämpad inte bara av en Petronius, en Dante, ja, en Rabelais eller i våra dagar en Joyce, utan i alla tider av en oöverskådlig mängd "hermetiska", symboliska eller mystiska diktare, givetvis så att var och en sjungit den

halvkvädna visan efter sin näbb.]

127 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to his cousin 'musikskriftstallare' Ove Nordwall, dated 8 October 1964, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

128 Bertolt Brecht is a further example of an author-poet who makes systematic use of the quotation-allusion technique. His early Hauspostille collection, for example, reads like a montage of Villon, Rimbaud and Goethe ("Wandrer's Nachtlied"). In a text "Über Plagiate," Brecht has humourously proclaimed himself an adherent of literary plagiarism and of the quotation technique, expressing hope in an eventual "Ehrung des literarischen Plagiats und seine Wiedereinsetzung in seine alten angestammten Rechte" [Bertolt Brecht, Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst I 1920-1932 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 100-101].

129 Lars Gustafsson, "Kung Midas i diktens rike," rev. of En Mölna-Elegi, Upsala Nya Tidning, 4 November 1960, p. 2.

130 Artur Lundkvist, "Ekelöfs förvandlingar," rev. of En Mölna-Elegi, Stockholms-Tidningen, 4 November 1960, p. 4. Lundkvist is playing here rather inanely with the Swedish expression "här ligger en hund begravnen" (literally: there is a dog buried here, meaning "there is something fishy about this" or "I smell a rat").

131 Göran Palm, "En av de stora dikterna," rev. of En Mölna-Elegi, Expressen, 3 November 1960, p. 4.

132 Letter from Ove Nordwall to Gunnar Ekelöf, dated 6 October 1964, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

133 See above:quote corresponding to note 114.

134 Typescript copy of a letter commentary from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg dealing with En Mölna-Elegi, dated 11 November 1963 (?), Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

135 Umberto Eco, Opera aperta, 2nd ed. (Milano: Bompiani, 1967), pp. 80-81.

136 Wolfgang Iser, "Image und Montage," in Immanente Ästhetik, ed. Wolfgang Iser (München: Fink, 1966), p. 378.

137 T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," rev. of Ulysses, by James Joyce, The Dial, Vol. LXXV, November 1923, p. 483.

138 Steiner, pp. 465-466.

139 Ibid., p. 301.

140 Commentary on history and tradition, capsule 'OF.'

- 141 T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Selected Prose, p. 23.
- 142 Ibid., p. 22.
- 143 See the chapter "Tradition och egenart" in Ekner, I den havandes liv, pp. 11-21.
- 144 "Ur författarens företal," in Ekelöf's "Notbok 1941," which contains among other things some notes dealing with the War and "krisstämningar," Anteckningsbok R (1941).
- 145 Capsule 'OF,' entry dated 1962.
- 146 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Selected Prose, p. 23.
- 147 Gunnar Ekelöf, Blandade kort (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1957), p. 9.
- 148 Notes with the rubric "Försök till P.M." attached to a letter dated 20 January 1967 from Gunnar Ekelöf to Karl Ragnar Gierow concerning the Swedish Academy's proposed editions of Linné and the classics, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 149 Capsule 'KT,' 'Kommentarer Trilogin.'
- 150 See Landgren's subtle analysis of Ekelöf's attitude towards tradition and in particular his use of the term "tradition" in the former's chapter "Det levande förflutna," pp. 137-182, especially p. 147. As Landgren has pointed out with reference to Brandell's term for the revolt against tradition, "neologism," Ekelöf's early "traditionsfientlighet" has to be seen in context, for it was hardly an isolated phenomenon but rather part of the Swedish cultural debate after 1925. Ekelöf's important early essay "Under hundstjärnan," where the poet's opposition to the traditional concept of tradition and culture is most pronounced, was first published in the journal Karavan in 1934. It is accessible in En röst, pp. 29-37.
- 151 Landgren, p. 147.
- 152 Ekelöf, "Konsten och livet," p. 58 (see note 104).
- 153 Cahier 5 (ca. 1933). I am quoting a previously quoted line in context.
- 154 Theodor W. Adorno, "Thesen über Tradition," in Ohne Leitbild. Parva Aesthetica (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 31.
- 155 Ibid., p. 30.
- 156 Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), I·2, pp. 696-697.

- 157 En röst, pp. 77-78.
- 158 Adorno, "Thesen über Tradition," p. 35.
- 159 Capsule 'OF.' Sections of this commentary have been published by Ingrid Ekelöf, En röst, pp. 75-76. According to her dating it is from the early 60's.
- 160 Commentary in pen, capsule 'OF.' Ekelöf was accustomed to writing even his commentaries in "verse" form as here.
- 161 Blandade kort, pp. 9-10.
- 162 The term occurs in a commentary on tradition and classical antiquity in capsule 'OF' (the same as that mentioned in note 159).
- 163 En röst, pp. 50-51.
- 164 Ibid., p. 51.
- 165 Georg Büchner, Werke und Briefe (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1965), p. 162.
- 166 Kladdbok 3, capsule Kladdbok 1-3.
- 167 Goethe, Faust I, lines 575-579.
- 168 Steiner, p. 249.
- 169 Hans Robert Jauss, Literaturgeschichte als Provokation (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 222.
- 170 Anteckningsbok AU (1965).
- 171 Anteckningsbok AC (1959-1961). Brackets in the original text.
- 172 Steiner, p. 359. For another discussion of Pound's capacity for an intuitive cultural empathy, see also Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), in particular the chapter "The Invention of China," pp. 192-222.
- 173 I am paraphrasing here a comment made to me by fru Ingrid Ekelöf in a conversation in Sigtuna on 11 June 1981.
- 174 Gunnar Ekelöf, Hundra år modern fransk dikt (1934; Stockholm: Bonniers, 1960), p. 7.
- 175 Steiner, p. 379.
- 176 Capra, pp. 71-72.
- 177 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 12 October 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 178 Typescript copy of a letter commentary from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 11 November 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection (see note 134).
- 179 Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv, letter 433.

180 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Selected Prose, p. 25.

181 Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in The Works of Samuel Johnson (Troy, New York: Pafraets Book Co., 1903), XII, p. 22.

182 In his unpublished Petronius commentary, capsule 'Översättningar,' Ekelöf writes: "The name Petronius in this context surprises us Swedes since as far as Latin education goes we are still restricted by an ideal which is Ciceronian and which has become just as scholastic as . . . [draft ends]. (Petronius' namn i detta sammanhang förvänar oss svenskar därför att vi vad latinundervisningen beträffar fortfarande är bundna av ett ideal som är ciceronianskt och som blivit lika skolastiskt som det en . . .)

183 In the same Petronius commentary drafts, Ekelöf speaks of the "Loeb Classical Library" edition of Petronius as "an edition with the Latin on the pages to the left which has accompanied me on all my travels ever since" (en upplaga med latinet på vänstersidorna som sedan följt mig i alla koffer-tar.)

184 P. 5 of the Petronius commentary draft, capsule 'Översättningar.'

185 Hellström employs the term "antiaesthetic" with respect to Ekelöf's "Strountes" production in particular (cf. Hellström, p. 267), but I extend it here to Ekelöf's views on culture and tradition in general.

186 Adorno, p. 37.

187 Entry dated 1 April 1964 in Ekelöf's Anteckningsbok AW,

188 A good example of this Victorian treatment of the erotic is the treatment of the verb "molere (molui, molitum)" in Lewis and Short's Latin Dictionary of 1879 (a standard reference work for all classical philologists), p. 1159. Here the term in its erotic use is not even defined but prudishly labelled "in male parte," after which the reader is referred to its use in Petronius, where Ekelöf could have become acquainted with it. The erotic implications of the term are, of course, essential to an understanding of the symbolic-thematic nexus of the mill in En Mølna-Elegi. A German Latin dictionary at least goes as far as to give the meaning of the verb as "geschlechtlich beschlafen" [see Handwörterbuch der lateinischen Sprache, Vol. II (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1963), p. 437; see also the entry "molere" in Walde-Hofmann's Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, Vol. II (Heidelberg: Carl Winter-Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1954), pp. 104-106]. The mill also plays an important role in the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, one of the impulses behind certain

scenes of the *Elegy*, in particular the "Eldsång," pp. 45-47. The association of the two millstones with the two partners in the sexual act, man and female, is ancient. Page 37 of the *Elegy* has an illustration of a primitive mill of the type used in Pompeii [the same illustration as that reproduced in Helen H. Tanzer, The Common People of Pompeii (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), a book with which Ekelöf was acquainted]. It is interesting to note that Vesta, the goddess of the hearth in whose temple a phallos was kept as a sacred object, came to be associated after 170 B.C. with the guild of the bakers in Rome. The name Mölna is of course derived from the Latin verb "molere."

¹⁸⁹ To take an example from another domain of Ekelöf's thought, one can cite his characterization of Swedenborg as a rational mystic, a characterization which is just as much a self-characterization of Ekelöf. Ekelöf's observation of this ambivalence in Swedenborg can at least in part have been inspired by Martin Lamm's remarkable Swedenborg monograph (see bibliography). (Both Ekner in I den havandes liv, p. 185, and Landgren, p. 176, cite Ekelöf's indication that he had gained his knowledge of the great Swedish mystic above all through Lamm's book and not through direct knowledge of Swedenborg's often esoteric texts.) Lamm points to the same doublesidedness rational-irrational in Swedenborg. In a commentary to Sjöberg on the subject of Swedenborg, Ekelöf's ability to see this ambivalence of the scientist-religious thinker Swedenborg shimmers through: "He [Swedenborg] was struck, in a brilliant way but not as the first, by the observation: There is an inner, irrational universe which is real. How can one explain this non-utilitarian phenomenon? Accordingly, as the research scientist that he undoubtedly was, he recollected several memorable dreams that he had had over a period of years and that had stuck to him. Man has a nocturnal self, a subconscious. So far I agree. This was a great self-diagnostic vision. I hardly have to stress that his subsequent application of this vision is indeed psychologically noteworthy but falls entirely outside the bounds of this first lucid observation!" (Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy of Ekelöf's marginal annotations to an article draft of Leif Sjöberg, copy in the possession of Ingrid Ekelöf). (Hän [Swedenborg] har, genialt men inte som den förste, slagits av iakttagelsen: Det finns ett inre, irrationellt universum som också är faktiskt. Hur förklara detta icke-utilistiska fenomen. Följaktligen har han som den forskare han utan tvivel var dragit sig till

minnes några memorabla drömmar han haft, kanske under flera år, men som hängt med. Människan har ett nattjag, ett undermedvetet. Så långt är jag med. Och det var en stor självdagnostisk syn. Jag behöver väl inte säga att hans senare tillämpningar av denna syn visserligen är psykologiskt högtintressanta men faller alldeles utanför denna första klara observation.) Ekelöf's own ability to balance between the extremes is perhaps one of the marks of his own vitality and can be seen in a self-characterization in his Anteckningsbok U: "[as is evident] I'm a sceptic in the midst of all my romanticism"[brackets Ekelöf's]. ([som synes är] jag skeptiker mitt i all romantik.)

¹⁹⁰ Unpublished draft of a Petronius commentary, capsule 'Översättningar.'

¹⁹¹ Feuerbach's thoughts on religion and materialism and their influence on Marx are well-known. I am paraphrasing here a summary of Feuerbach's philosophy given in Kröner's Philosophisches Wörterbuch, ed. Georgii Schischkoff, 17th ed. (Stuttgart, Kröner, 1965), p. 162.

¹⁹² Ekelöf's draft to a Petronius commentary, capsule 'Översättningar.'

¹⁹³ Capsule 'OF.'

¹⁹⁴ Early note from a notebook dated "1941," capsule 'Sent på jorden.' According to Ekelöf's own marginal note, the entry could be from a later date but must be from the war years.

¹⁹⁵ Anteckningsbok T (1942), entry dated 1 September 1942 dealing with the "preludes" which Ekelöf at one point considered publishing along with En Mölna-Elegi, in particular "Samothrake" and a prelude "Daphnis & Chloë. Hommage à Claude Lorrain-Maurice Ravel."

¹⁹⁶ Ekelöf, Edith Södergran studier, p. *16. There is an interesting agreement between Ekelöf's interpretation of Södergran's "Ingenting" here and that of Tideström in his 1949 book on Södergran: Gunnar Tideström, Edith Södergran (1949; Stockholm: Aldus/Bonniers, 1960), p. 79. Both associate the poem with reproductions of popular commercial art, in particular with tourist posters, and with the theme of escape from the confines of daily life. Tideström writes of the poem: "The warm human reality which the yearning person pictures to himself is also unreal, as on a travel poster." (Den livsvarma verklighet som den längtande utmålar för sig är överklig också den, som på en turistaffisch.) Ekelöf reviewed Tideström's book for BLM (1950) and one wonders to what extent Tideström's interpretation of

the poem may have influenced Ekelöf's own. In any case Ekelöf in his BIM review (see bibliography), pp. 137-138, does not eliminate the possibility that such reproductions of art or "anti-art" may have inspired some of Södergran's poems: "In answer to the question as to the possibility that reproductions of visual art may have inspired certain poems . . . it can be said parenthetically that as late as 1938 the cover pages from weeklies and monthlies were still glued to the old wallpaper in Södergran's deathroom, but that these coloured illustrations as far as the present writer can remember were in the decadent style of the time and, to put it bluntly, ugly." (Till frågan om möjligheten av att reproduktioner av bildkonst inspirerat vissa dikter . . . kan parentetiskt meddelas att de gamla tapeterna i Södergrans dödsrum ännu 1938 hade kvar uppklistrade omslagssidor till vecko- eller månadstidningar, men att dessa färgbilder såvitt undertecknad kan minnas var i tidens dekadenta stil och rentut sagt fula.)

197 Blandade kort, pp. 12-13.

198 Cahier I, pp. 16-17.

199 Ibid., p. 72. This passage also cited in Hellström, p. 247.

200 Capsule 'OF.' Also cited in En röst, p. 75.

201 In his discussion of Ekelöf's attitude towards the surrealists and Rimbaud, Landgren also deals with the role of the "Gesamtkunstwerk" in Ekelöf's thought. See Landgren, pp. 115-116.

202 Draft to an article with the title "Samarbete" (a 'förstudie' to the essay "Konsten och livet"?), capsule 'Tidiga manuskript,' from the early 1930's (1934?).

203 Rimbaud, Oeuvres, p. 252.

204 Cahier 5, 'förstudie' to the essay "Konsten och livet" entitled 'Artikel.' Cf. Landgren, p. 115.

205 An "influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'

206 Gunnar Ekelöf, rev. of Emanuel Swedenborg, Drömboken, ed. Per Erik Wahlund, BIM, årg. 22 (1953), 1, p. 61.

207 Helen Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot (New York: Dutton, 1950), p. 165.

208 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Georg Svensson from Dorotea, dated 6 May 1941, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.

209 Ekelöf's rendering of a part of section I of East Coker, in T. S. Eliot, Dikter, ed. Ronald Bottrall and Gunnar Ekelöf, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1948), p. 76.

- 210 Karl Vennberg, "Legenden och texttydarna," rev. of En Målna-Elegi, Aftonbladet, 3 November 1960, p. 2.
- 211 Lundkvist, "Ekelöfs förvandlingar," p. 4.
- 212 Ibid.
- 213 See Ek, pp. 206-207.
- 214 Ibid., p. 207.
- 215 Cleanth Brooks, "My Credo," Kenyon Review, Vol. XIII (1951), p. 74.
- 216 Hugh Kenner, "Bradley," in T. S. Eliot. A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Hugh Kenner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 36.
- 217 Eco, p. 81.
- 218 Ek, p. 207.
- 219 Hellström, p. 274.
- 220 Ekelöf's refusal of an all too academic approach to the problem of "organic unity"--if not of the concept altogether--is evident in such statements as the following (Blandade kort, p. 26): "The Red Room is of course also one of those books built on picturesque details and it has met with exactly the same criticism as Ottar Tralling, namely that it doesn't hang together or form an organic whole--which both nonetheless do in my opinion, though on an entirely different level than that prescribed by 'serious' critics." (Röda rummet är ju också en sådan där av pittoreska detaljer uppbyggd bok och den har rönt alldeles samma kritik som Ottar Tralling, nämligen att inte hänga ihop, inte bilda en organisk helhet--vilket båda nu enligt min mening ändå gör, fast på helt annat plan än det som föreskrevs av "allvarsamma" kritiker.)
- 221 I am thinking here above all of Hellström's analysis of the aesthetics of the incomplete in Ekelöf's work as it developed under the influence of Taoism, Buddhism and Oriental thought (see his chapter III and the section: "'Jag skriver inte mera 'poesi'": 50-talets absurdism och antiestetik,' pp. 234-282). Both Egbert Faas and Umberto Eco in their books on the open-form devote considerable attention to the influence of Oriental aesthetics on the development of the open-form in Western art and literature.
- 222 Brooks, "My Credo," p. 72. For the reference to this article by Brooks I am indebted to Egbert Faas.
- 223 See the heading "Unity" in the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (1965; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 880-881.
- 224 Plato, Phaedrus in Collected Dialogues of Plato, ed. Edith Hamilton

and Huntington Cairns (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), p. 510.

225 Ibid., p. 511.

226 See Hugo Friedrich, Montaigne, 2nd ed. (1949; Bern: Francke Verlag, 1967), pp. 327-330.

227 Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 974. I am obviously in no way implying that there is a strict correspondence between the open-form as practised by Montaigne and the modern usage thereof in T. S. Eliot and Gunnar Ekelöf but rather that there are artistic forms of all periods for which the concept of "organic unity" is hardly germane.

228 Egbert Faas, Offene Formen in der modernen Kunst und Literatur (München: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1975), p. 11.

229 Ibid., p. 12.

230 Iser, "Image und Montage," pp. 386-387.

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231 Paul Van Tieghem, La Littérature comparée (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1931), p. 138.

232 Ronald Primeau, Influx, ed. Ronald Primeau (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977). p. 6.

233 Gunnar Ekelöf, "Sviter," rev. of Sviter, by Erik Lindegren, BLM, Örg. 17 (1948), 1, p. 53.

234 Gábor Hermerén, Influence in Art and Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 130-131.

235 Ibid., p. 178.

236 Ibid., p. 277.

237 Ibid., p. 350.

238 Ekelöf, Cahier I, p. 47 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.

239 Claudio Guillén, Literature as System (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), note 16, p. 385.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid., p. 386.

242 A note written on an envelope, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' dated 1963 by Ingrid Ekelöf.

- 243 Friedrich Nietzsche, Gesammelte Werke (München: Musarion Verlag, 1926), XIX, p. 50. The spelling of all quotations from the Nietzsche edition modernized by me.
- 244 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 245 Nietzsche, Ges. Werke, XVI, p. 303.
- 246 Hermann Hesse, Die Nürnberger Reise (1927; Berlin: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1953), p. 7.
- 247 Guillén, pp. 28-29.
- 248 Ekelöf, "influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 249 Another "influence" commentary in pen, 3 pgs., undated, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 250 Conradin Perner, Gunnar Ekelöfs Nacht am Horizont und seine Begegnung mit Stéphane Mallarmé (Basel/Stuttgart: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1974), p. 106.
- 251 Guillén, p. 20.
- 252 Kjell Espmark, "Ekelöf och Eliot," BLM, årg. 28 (1959), 8, p. 683.
- 253 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.' Unfortunately it is virtually impossible to distinguish between the various "influence" commentaries; they are, however, all in capsule 'K.'
- 254 Carl Fehrman, Poesi och parodi, p. 230.
- 255 Erik Lindegren, "Gunnar Ekelöf--en modern mystiker," in Kritiskt 40-tal, ed. Karl Vennberg and Werner Aspenström (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1948), p. 297.
- 256 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 257 Letter from Knut Jaensson to Gunnar Ekelöf, dated Getå 10 February 1949, Gunnar Ekelöf collection, Uppsala University Library.
- 258 Bengt Holmqvist, "Sången om någonting annat," Nya Argus, årg. 40 (1947), 13, p. 196.
- 259 Artur Lundkvist, "Sång för att leva bättre," rev. of Färjesång, by Gunnar Ekelöf, BLM, årg. 10 (1941), 8, p. 646.
- 260 See Lars Bäckström, Erik Lindegren, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1979), p. 52. A statement in one of the "influence" commentaries seems to indicate, however, that Ekelöf had no or at most a very superficial acquaintance with Lindegren's translation of Ash-Wednesday (capsule 'K'): "I have no memory of Ash-Wednesday. I remember that when it was intended that Eliot should come during the War and I together with Ronald Bottrall got the commission to edit a collected volume of what was then available

[of Eliot's works] in translation here and there, Bottrall expressed his great dissatisfaction with Lindegren's translation of the poem. I glanced at it but didn't have time to compare. . . ." [Ash-Wednesday har jag inget minne av. Jag minns att då det var meningen att Eliot skulle komma under kriget och jag tillsammans med Ronald Bottrall fick uppdraget redigera en samlingsvolym av vad som på olika håll fanns översatt, så yttrade Bottrall sitt höga missnöje med Lindegrens översättning av dikten. Jag ögnade i den men hade inte tid att jämföra. . . .]

²⁶¹ "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 3 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.

²⁶² Richard Steffen, Svensk litteraturhistoria för den högre elementarundervisningen, 10th ed. (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget / Norstedt, 1944), p. 281.

²⁶³ Erik Hjalmer Linder, Fem decennier av nittonhundratalet, in Ny illustrerad svensk litteraturhistoria, 4th ed. (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1966), p. 768. Ekelöf has himself underlined the fact that the supposed similarities between Four Quartets and Fårjesång are largely superficial and impressionistic and reside more in the consciousness of the critic than in that of the poet (letter to Sjöberg from Sigtuna, dated 2 January 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection): "Moreover the fact remains that E's [Eliot's] poems and mine have different things to say. As far as the way of saying them is concerned, there exists a certain superficial similarity, at most a kind of tone of voice, lowered and seemingly objective." (E. 8! står fast att E:s dikter och mina har olika saker att säga. Vad sättet att säga dem på beträffar föreligger en ytlig likhet, ett slags tonfall mest, nedskruvat och skenbart sakligt.)

²⁶⁴ Joris Taelis, "Gunnar Ekelöf," Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century, ed. Wolfgang Bernhard Fleischman (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1967), I, p. 322. In the revised 1981 edition of this same work, ed. Leonard S. Klein, Ross Shideler may be commended for not having mentioned the name Eliot in connection with his entry on Gunnar Ekelöf.

²⁶⁵ Hjalmar Alving and Gudmar Hasselberg, Svensk litteraturhistoria, 5th ed. (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget / Bonniers, 1963), p. 395.

²⁶⁶ Sven Hakon Rossel, Skandinavische Literatur 1870-1970 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), pp. 133-134.

²⁶⁷ Alrik Gustafson, A History of Swedish Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961), p. 480.

- 268 Ibid., p. 479.
- 269 Ibid., pp. 478-479.
- 270 Espmark, "Ekelöf och Eliot," p. 684.
- 271 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 4 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.
- 272 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 16 April 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 273 Typescript copy of letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 17 September 1963, note 19 (Ekelöf's habit was to write certain "literary" letters in the form of numbered annotations), Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 274 Donald Gallup, T. S. Eliot. A Bibliography (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), pp. 62-63, 69.
- 275 Ibid., pp. 68-69.
- 276 Espmark, "Ekelöf och Eliot," p. 684.
- 277 Gunnar Ekelöf, "Eliots betydelse för mig," Röster i Radio, årg. 15 (1948), 48 (28 November), p. 6.
- 278 Reidar Ekner, Gunnar Ekelöf. En bibliografi, in Acta Bibliothecae Regiae Stockholmiensis (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1970), VIII, p. 45.
- 279 Espmark, "Ekelöf och Eliot," pp. 684-685.
- 280 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Bonniers förlag, dated 23 April 1941, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.
- 281 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Kaj Bonnier, dated 27 April 1941, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.
- 282 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Kaj Bonnier from Kleva, Orust, dated 13 July 1941, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.
- 283 Capsule 'Mölna,' folder 'c.' The title "Not People" (variant "But not for People") would, of course, be an allusion to Heidenstam's line "Men ej till människor" in Ensamhetens tankar (see note 22 and corresponding quote).
- 284 "Kommentar: Ekelöf v. Eliot," capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 1 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.
- 285 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.' Anders Osterling wrote of the débutant Gunnar Ekelöf in his disparaging review of Sent på jorden in the Svenska Dagbladet of 4 August 1932: "A young authority is said to have stated recently in connection with the Björnson jubileum that nearly all our poets of the younger generation have shattered nerves. That

is the speaker's opinion. But in Gunnar Ekelöf's debut the bad young nerves are undeniably grating, and the wayfarer seems to be lost all too soon in the waste land which T. S. Eliot has depicted. The future will have to decide to what degree this is a misfortune or a fashion of the times." [En ung auktoritet lär nyligen i samband med Björnsonjubileet ha förklarar, att nästan hela den yngre författargenerationen hos oss har förstörda nerver. Glosan får stå för talarens räkning. Men i Gunnar Ekelöfs debut gnissla onökligen de dåliga ungdomsnerverna, och vandringsmannen tycks alltför tidigt förrirrad i det öde land, som T. S. Eliot har skildrat. Framtiden får visa, i vad mån detta är fatalitet eller tidsmod.]

286 Blandade kort, pp. 162-163.

287 Linder, Fem decennier, p. 643.

288 See also Ekner, I den havandes liv, p. 39.

289 Promenader och utflykter, pp. 17-18.

290 Ekelöf, "Eliots betydelse för mig," p. 6.

291 Original copy of letter from Tora (Dahl) Jaensson to Gunnar Ekelöf, dated Lidingö 23 May 1942.

292 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 4 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.

293 Linder, Fem decennier, p. 796.

294 Such ditties are of course common in the child's world but there is a striking similarity between Ekelöf's and section IV of Birger Sjöberg's poem "Av raka linjen" in Kriser och kransar with lines such as "Sidan fem: med raskhet och kläm / skojare ringas på jakt. / Sidan sex: En livsglad, som väcks / ur liv i champagneprakt." Outside of the direct quote from Bellman ("Bort vid en grind uti en skog") in this section of the Elegy, there is also the Latinizing form "Martii månad" which would have been entirely at home in the Swedish of Bellman's period. Another quote can be mentioned en passant and that is the lines (35, 371-372) "And at eight the mountain gives birth / to a rat." (Och klockan åtta föder berget fram / en rått). Originally the lines are from Horace in the form "Panturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus," but they also serve as mottos to chapters in Jacob Wallenberg's novel from 1781 Min son på galejan (literally: My Son in the Galleys); the Swedish expression "vad hade min son på galejan att göra" (why did you take that risk) may come to mind in connection with Wallenberg's novel. The name Wallenberg is mentioned several times in the Mölna manuscripts.

- 295 Lägga patience, p. 46.
- 296 T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Collected Poems: 1909-1962 (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 17.
- 297 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' pp. 3-4 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.
- 298 A note on p. 9 of Ekelöf's annotated copy of En Mölna-Elegi indicates the source.
- 299 T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land. A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts, ed. Valerie Eliot (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), pp. 46-47.
- 300 F. R. Leavis, "The Waste Land," in T. S. Eliot. A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Hugh Kenner (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962). p. 91.
- 301 Faas, Offene Formen, pp. 139-140.
- 302 Linder, Fem decennier, pp. 793-794.
- 303 Ekelöf, Dikter (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1965), p. 117.
- 304 Ekelöf's unpublished Petronius commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 305 Kindlers Literaturlexikon (Zürich: Kindler Verlag, 1964), VI, p. 842.
- 306 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Knut and Tora (Dahl) Jaensson, dated Dorotea 10-11 May 1942, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 307 See also Sjöberg, A Reader's Guide, p. 53. Translation taken from the Penguin translation of Petronius, The Satyricon, p. 171 (see bibliography).
- 308 Petronii Arbitri Cena Trimalchionis, ed. Martin S. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). p. 141.
- 309 Walde-Hofmann, Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, II, p. 6.
- 310 Reinhold Klotz, Händwörterbuch der lateinischen Sprache, I, p. 1143. Section 52,8 of The Satyricon has the expression "cordacem ducere" ('einen cordacem aufführen'). Smith comments on the "cordax": "The precise nature of this dance is more doubtful than its obscenity."
- 311 Ekelöf's own definition of this term as applied to Petronius in the introduction to "Petronius. Åtta dikter i svensk tolkning av Gunnar Ekelöf," BLM, årg. 29 (1960), 4, p. 271.
- 312 Petronius, The Satyricon and the Fragments, trans. John Sullivan (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965), p. 16.
- 313 Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot (New York: Ivan Obolensky, 1959), p. 158.

314 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 12 October 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

315 Such a date of publication would correspond well with the fact that Ekelöf spent the winter of 1954-1955 in Italy, in part in the region of Naples (see Ingrid Ekelöf's Ekelöf-chronology in En självbiografi, p. 15). The article, at least under this title, is not cited in Ekner's bibliography.

316 Draft in pen to an article "Neapel betyder," capsule 'PP,' 'Publicerad Prosa.'

317 Hellström, p. 279.

318 Translation note. The term "philosophizing emotionally" (känslofilosofierande) is a part of that whole complex of "thought-feeling" in Ekelöf's world view; thought and feeling are not seen as a rigid dualism but rather as complementary terms. This attitude becomes apparent in the essay "Under hundstjärnan," where Ekelöf insists on the value of emotion as a vehicle of knowledge and emphasizes the limitations of discursive thought with such statements as "That which I know is already dead, thought kills everything that it gets hold of." (Det jag vet är redan dött, tanken dödar allt det kommer åt.)

319 Sjöberg, A Reader's Guide, p. 53.

320 Regarding such poetic beginnings Ekelöf writes in a letter to Leif Sjöberg of 17 September 1963 (typescript copy, Gunnar Ekelöf collection): "Apropos influence: I am glad that by incalculable chance I still have an envelope with my schoolboy verse; otherwise I could all of a sudden be accused of being influenced by absurdism. Then (in 1925) I knew no more about dadaism than the name. Holy Soupçacqua and Anabasis as an exuberant gypsy band occur there for the first time." [Betr. påverkning: jag är glad att jag av en outräknelig slump har kvar ett kuvert med mina skolpojksdikter, annars kunde jag rätt som det är beskyllas för att vara påverkad av absurdismen. Om dadaismen visste jag då (1925) inte mer än namnet. Där förekommer första gången den helige Soupçacqua och Anabasis som ett frodigt zigenarfölje.]

321 Kenner, The Pound Era, p. 62.

322 This particular stanza is found among the Ekelöf manuscripts, capsule 'Översättningar,' alongside the marginal question in Ingrid Ekelöf's handwriting: "Originaltext av William Blake?" It can be identified as being from Joyce's Chamber Music.

323 Note 2, "Noter till artikelkoncept," typescript copy of notes of Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg's draft of an article on En Mölna-Elegi published in the Germanic Review of March 1965. In the possession of Ingrid Ekelöf.

324 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.' The statement, at least as regards Petronius, is corroborated by another in the unpublished Petronius commentary, where Ekelöf remarks on his having begun the reading of Petronius while at 'gymnasium': "I don't remember what year it was I began Petronius, but it was in the gymnasium forms, at some time or other contemporary with when we began to force Livius down." (Jag minns inte vilket år det var som jag började med Petronius, men det var i ringarna, någon gång samtidigt med att vi pinade i oss Livius.) It is pretty much out of the question that Ekelöf could have read Eliot at such an early date, for The Waste Land only appeared in 1922, at which time Ekelöf was a mere 15.

325 Bengt Holmqvist, "Sången om någonting annat," p. 196.

326 Carl Fehrman, "Teknik och tradition hos Gunnar Ekelöf," Svensk Litteraturtidskrift, årg. 9 (1946), 3, p. 112 (an early version of his chapter on Ekelöf in Poesi och parodi).

327 Capsule 'Översättningar,' folder 'Valfrändskaper.'

328 Malcolm Lowry, Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place and Lunar Caustic (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1961), p. 102.

329 See the notes to the poem in Rimbaud, Oeuvres complètes, pp. 850-851. The editor also writes: "Delacroix avait également traité La Mort d'Ophélie, lithographie, en 1843."

330 Georg Heym, Dichtungen und Schriften, ed. Karl Ludwig Schneider (Hamburg / München: Verlag Heinrich Ellermann, 1964), I, pp. 160-162.

331 Bertolt Brecht, Gesammelte Werke in acht Bänden (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1967), IV, p. 252.

332 P. 15 of Ekelöf's own annotated copy of En Mölna-Elegi.

333 James Joyce, Ulysses (1914, 1918; New York: Random House, 1934), p. 46.

334 Ibid., pp. 50-51.

335 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 17 September 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

336 Commentary to an article draft of Leif Sjöberg in a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Sjöberg, dated 20 April 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

- 337 "Influence" commentary in typescript copy, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 338 A quote from Baudelaire's "Les sept vieillards," section "Tableaux parisiens" of Les Fleurs du Mal. The line is also quoted in note 60 of The Waste Land but to those who would therein see an influence from Eliot to Ekelöf one can only repeat Ekelöf's statement: "Påverknings^osökande gör sig inget besvär."
- 339 Unpublished Petronius commentary, capsule 'Översättningar.'
- 340 Anteckningsbok T ("Anteckningar till En Mölna-Elegi och 13 Preludier"), one of the three capsules 'Anteckningsböcker.'
- 341 Martin Lamm, Swedenborg (Stockholm: H. Geber, 1915), p. 80.
- 342 Ibid., p. 40.
- 343 Gunnar Ekelöf, "Döden," Perspektiv, årg. 7 (1956), 8, p. 358. On the copy of the poem in the Gunnar Ekelöf collection one reads in Gunnar Ekelöf's handwriting (?) "Till Mölna."
- 344 Capsule 'Mölna,' folder 'j.'
- 345 Lamm, p. 223.
- 346 Anteckningsbok E (1930-tal), old note in pen.
- 347 Joyce, Ulysses, p. 51.
- 348 Ruin, p. 304.
- 349 "Kladd till brev till Reidar Ekner" (1960), concerning "Panthoidens sång," capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 350 Kenner, The Pound Era, p. 380.
- 351 Ruin, p. 314.
- 352 Julius Frauenstädt, Schopenhauer-Lexikon (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1871), I, p. 114. All subsequent quotes from this collection of Schopenhauer quotations have been modernized by me.
- 353 Ruin, p. 312.
- 354 Capsule 'Mölna,' folder marked 'överst,' containing 'Argument' to the Elegy.
- 355 August Strindberg, Skrifter, ed. Gunnar Brandell (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1962), XI, pp. 373-374.
- 356 This is a draft to the prose poem "Solnedgången" in Promenader och utflykter but is unidentified in Anteckningsbok G.
- 357 Ruin, p. 315.

358 Ruin, p. 338: "Such an elusive being in fluttering, continually changing coats is just what the poet is." (Ett sådant ofixerbart väsen under fladdrande, ideligen skiftande kappor är just vad poeten är.)

359 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to his mother Valborg Hahr, dated 1926, Gunnar Ekelöf collection. The letter dates from the period of Ekelöf's sojourn as a summer guest at the home of a Protestant minister in Scotland, a period which, poeticized, is described in the "novell" "Ljungkvisten" in Promenader och utflykter.

360 Ekelöf, Dikter, p. 287.

361 Capsule 'PP,' 'Publicerad Prosa.'

362 Capsule 'K.' The "eventyr" of Andersen which it is a question of here goes under the name of its main "character": "Stoppenaalen," H. C. Andersen, Samlede Eventyr og Historier (Odense: Flensted, 1961), pp. 242-244.

363 Capsule 'Tidiga manuskript' (1927--->). The entry bears the heading "Encheiridion" after a work of the same name by the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus.

364 Promenader och utflykter, pp. 54-55.

365 See Henri Bergson, Le Rire (1900), in Oeuvres, p. 414.

366 Anteckningsbok M (1938-40). As far as Lewis Carroll is concerned, a note in Ekelöf's Anteckningsbok N (1939-40, perhaps even earlier) under the heading "Fem-veckorsplan f. böcker" reads: "Exchange: Alice & forwarding of Looking-Gl." (Byta: Alice & eftersändn. av Looking-Gl.)

367 "Tat tvam asi," Philosophisches Wörterbuch, pp. 589-590.

368 Thoreau, Walden, p. 94.

369 Ekelöf, "Ur 'En Mölna-Elegi,'" BIM, årg. 15 (1946), 5, p. 368.

370 Capsule 'Mölna,' folder 'j,' brackets Ekelöf's.

371 Ekelöf, "Döden och flickan," Prisma, årg. 2 (1949), 2, p. 60. The topic of Ekelöf's and Eliot's notes to their respective poems is an interesting one. Such notes have certainly played their part in establishing the reputation of both Ekelöf and Eliot as learned poets. One reason that Ekelöf puts forward for subsequently eliminating the notes to En Mölna-Elegi when it was published in its entirety as compared to the publication of the various fragments was that he found such notes pretentious (should one see a possible polemic against Eliot in such a remark?). The substantiality and reliability of Eliot's notes to The Waste Land have been questioned, by

Hugh Kenner for one, who points out that they were put in more as an after-thought to please the editor and perhaps to lend the poem a semblance of unity; in Kenner's view one does best to read The Waste Land "faisant abstraction" of the notes.

372 Lägga patience, pp. 46-47.

373 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 7 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.

374 "Influence" commentary in pen, 3 pgs., undated, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'

375 Ibid.

376 Lars Lindvall, "Fernando Pessoa's Havsode och Ekelöfs Samothrake," Svensk Litteraturtidskrift, årg. 1970, 1, p. 31.

377 See Guillén's quote in the text corresponding to note 247.

378 Hellström, p. 94.

379 Promenader och utflykter, p. 28.

380 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 17 September 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

381 "Influence" commentary in pen, 3 pgs., undated, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'

382 An endnote to the Ekelöf chapter in Espmark, Själén i bild, p. 290.

383 Karl Erik Lagerlöf, "Vad är en lärodiktare?," rev. of Tre lärodiktare, by Marie Louise Ramnefalk, Dagens Nyheter, 30 December 1974.

384 Promenader och utflykter, p. 207. It has become almost a commonplace for poets to claim that the "rhythmische Gestalt" of a poem or poetic work came to them before the actual words. I have come across innumerable remarks to that effect, in Schiller for one. Thus one has to approach Ekelöf's statement with the caution it deserves.

385 Postal card from Gunnar Ekelöf to Bonniers from "Dorothy" (Lappland), dated 18 May 1941, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

386 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Bonniers, dated 18 May 1941, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv, letter 000002.

387 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Georg Svensson of Bonniers, dated 6 May 1941, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.

388 Typescript copy of letter from Georg Svensson to Gunnar Ekelöf, dated 14 April 1943, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.

389 Undated letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Bonniers, sent from Dorotea, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv.

- 390 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Bonniers, dated Dorotea 5 May 1943, Albert Bonniers förlags arkiv, letter 000146.
- 391 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 5 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy. First brackets mine.
- 392 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Knut and Tora (Dahl) Jaensson, dated Dorotea 25 May 1942, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 393 Card from Gunnar Ekelöf to his maternal aunt Hanna von Hedenberg from H818, undated but probably from around Christmas 1948 (?), Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 394 Letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Kaj Bonnier, dated H818 15 December 1948, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 395 Letter from Georg Svensson to Gunnar Ekelöf, dated Stockholm 15 December 1956. Georg Svensson quotes here verbatim from a letter to him from T. S. Eliot.
- 396 Gunnar Ekelöf, "Sagt om Eliot," Prisma, årg. 1 (1948), 5, p. 27.
- 397 Original of letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 29 July 1966, Gunnar Ekelöf collection. The fragment in question (with the Eliot quote) was published in Ars of 1942 (see bibliography). Eliot makes the claim of his orthodoxy, albeit in a more indirect form than Ekelöf seems to allow for here, in his preface to For Lancelot Andrewes. Essays on Style and Order (London: Faber and Faber, 1928, p. ix), where he describes "the general point of view [of the book] as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion." Ekelöf's Dublin reference is to one of the characters of Ulysses. Translation note: the Svensk Ordbok published by "Natur och Kultur" defines "flådermjergskula" (pellet of elder pith) thus: "small round pellet of elder pith (which can be used in certain simple electrical experiments)." [liten rund kula av flådermjerg (som kan användas vid vissa enkla elektriska försök).]
- 398 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 6 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.
- 399 Typescript copy of letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 24 May 1964, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 400 Lägga patience, p. 45.
- 401 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Selected Prose, p. 29.
- 402 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 403 Hans Kuhn, "Gunnar Ekelöf," rev. of Gunnar Ekelöf, Poesie, trans. Nelly Sachs, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 8 April 1963.

- 404 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 5 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy.
- 405 "Brev rörande val av nobelpristagare," letter of 12 October 1965 from Gunnar Ekelöf to the other members of the Swedish Academy, Gunnar Ekelöf collection. Ekelöf's hesitations with respect to the acceptability of Sholokov were apparently based on the fact that the latter was an official "Soviet" writer; his reluctance to accept Neruda on the (mistaken?) belief that the Chilean poet had been involved in one way or another in the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico in 1940, at least by his acquiescence to the plot.
- 406 "Influence" commentary, 3 pgs., undated, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' brackets Ekelöf's.
- 407 Original copy of a letter from J. C. Lambert to Gunnar Ekelöf, dated 8 September 1962 (?), Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 408 Matts Rying, "Besök hos Gunnar Ekelöf," Röster i Radio, årg. 17 (1950), 14, p. 5.
- 409 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated Sigtuna 26 June 1963, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 410 Original copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 29 July 1966, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 411 Guillén, pp. 39-40.
- 412 Ibid., p. 40.
- 413 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.' The "market" in question is of course that of the official cultural institutions and their cultural heroes such as Eliot.
- 414 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 415 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 17 September 1963, note 21, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 416 Capsule 'ODG,' a poem belonging to the "Grotesker" according to G. E. The "Stål" of the poem is the Fänrik Stål of the Finnish-Swedish poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg's ballad and song cycle about the Finnish "Frieheits-kampf" against Russia.
- 417 Typescript copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 17 September 1963, note 19, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.
- 418 Blandade kort, p. 12.
- 419 Original copy of a letter from Gunnar Ekelöf to Leif Sjöberg, dated 29 July 1966, note 81, Gunnar Ekelöf collection.

- 420 Commentary about Sweden and the European tradition, capsule 'OF,' 'Opublicerad Försöksprosa,' dated 1962.
- 421 Frauenstädt, Schopenhauer-Lexikon, p. 124.
- 422 Marginal note in pen to a draft of "Böljesång," among loose sheets in folder 'c,' capsule 'Mölna.'
- 423 Capsule 'Mölna,' folder marked 'överst.'
- 424 Frauenstädt, Schopenhauer-Lexikon, pp. 116-117. All ellipses here in the original text.
- 425 "Influence" commentary, 3 pgs., undated, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.'
- 426 "Influence" commentary, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer,' p. 7 in Ingrid Ekelöf's typescript copy. For the quote in context see note 373 and corresponding translation and original.
- 427 Ibid.

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Appendix

The Swedish originals of all indented quotes are given here. The numbers are those of the pages numbers where the indented quotes begin. The two main sources of translations other than my own are the translation of A Mölna Elegy by Rukeyser / Sjöberg and the translation of selected poems of Gunnar Ekelöf by Nathan / Larson (see bibliography); where they have been used these sources are given parenthetically with the pages numbers referring to those particular editions. Where an English translation has been cited in the notes as the source of an indented quote originally in Swedish, the source of the original Swedish (for example Strindberg, Skrifter, ed. Brandell etc.) has been indicated here. Some liberty has been taken in making slight changes in the borrowed translations by both Rukeyser / Sjöberg and Nathan / Larson where this has been thought necessary. Italian quotes are also given in the original.

8. På sin tid hände det, att man ondgjorde sig över att Valéry gav ut olika versioner av samma dikt, till och med varandra motsägande versioner. Han har alltid haft argument att försvara sig med och har direkt uppmanat sin tids diktare att--liksom kompositörerna som arbetar i tonernas material--producera och lämna efter sig en rikedom av variationer över samma tema. Bland de svenska diktare, som följt hans uppmaning är Gunnar Ekelöf.³
11. Nike, segergudinnan, är själv en molnbild. Har någon någonsin ägt henne, vunnit segern; nått målet? Knappast. På sin höjd har han hjälpt någon annan på väg mot henne. Målet viker ständigt undan likt gallionsbilden på skeppet. Men om detta är sant, då är ju målet, då är ju hamnen ombord, då är segern förbunden med själva stråvandet. . . .¹³

13. Några av dessa fragment har också senare använts i olika diktsamlingar, men då detta skett under delvis mycket modifierade former och i olikartade, gentemot dikterna oorganiska sammanhang, har det för mig varit av ett visst kuriositetsintresse att återställa dem i deras ursprungliga skick och återinsätta dem i vad som finns kvar av deras rätta omgivning.¹⁷

14. Det finns i varje dikt, menar Riffaterre, en kärna som han kallar matris. Matrisen består av en minimal sats, ibland en hel mening, ibland ett enda ord, som i så fall inte förekommer i dikten. Matrisen återfinns oftast i de första raderna eller någon gång i titeln. Den genererar sedan en rad variationer till dess ämnets möjligheter är uttömda. Matrisen innehåller alltså den information som upprepas dikten igenom och som ger den enhet och därmed signifikans. Denna variationsprocess kallar han expansion.¹⁸

Full fathom five

[Jag vill] drunkna

utan vippbräda, [utan] kanon-

kula, [utan]* flagg

eller hellre brännas

[brännas så att] med stigande

rök och släckas

Så att det lättaste av mig

stiger till stratosfärerna

hamnar som sporer på

fjärran stjärna:

nytt liv

så att det medeltunga ligger

i var mans trädgård;

som gödsel

så att det tunga når askan

är utströdd svävas i

oceanerna

munnas och utmunnas som odugligt av

oceanernas fiskar och guldfiskar.

[kinesisk oduglighet]

så att det tyngsta sjunker till botten.

så att det tyngsta tyngsta

förenas med medelpunkten.

(du är vågd på en våg och befunnen
dels lätt, dels tung).¹⁹

*och

15. (Nathan / Larson, p. 41)

Jag överger mig

så som den sista rätten ett sjunkande skepp,

ett brinnande vrak av vilket djupet får sitt när höjden fått
sitt,

(du är vågd på en våg och befunnen dels lätt, dels tung),

en skeppsbruten som driver på det mörka gestaltskiiftande,
attraherad och bestrålad av den hemlighetsfulla kampens
stjärna,

hon som osedd är mäktigare än sol och måne,

hon som på en gång är enkel och dubbel, dunkel och ljus,

på en gång! Inte i tur och ordning.

16. I sådana här anteckningsböcker behöver allting inte vara från det
år de är daterade, tvärtom är mycket ofta senare, då jag tagit vad
papper jag haft till hands. Jag har märkt att jag nästan alltid
brukat börja dem i ena ändan, och det har ofta varit i föresats
att skriva en fortlöpande "dagbok" av något slag, för att senare
börja i andra ändan (boken vänd upp och ner) i en liknande (fast
mindre stark) föresats. Vad som står i mitten torde vara senare
än dessa båda "börjor".²⁰

17. Två ting kan vara värda att kommentera, innan vi lämnar detta
diktens initialstadium, sjustrofdikten. Det ena är det faktum

att Valéry uppenbarligen påbörjat dikten medan han var i färd med att samtidigt komponera andra dikter; nästan alla dikterna i Charnes har, säger Valéry, gjorts "simultanément". Förhållandet är inte ovanligt; många paralleller i andra diktares anteckningsböcker skulle kunna återopas. Under en produktiv period rinner gärna idéflöden och uppslag till från många håll.²¹

18. Jag längtar hem sen åtta långa år.
 I själva sömnen har jag längtan känt.
 Jag längtar hem. Jag längtar var jag går
 --men ej till människor! Jag längtar marken,
 jag längtar stenarna där barn jag lekt.²²

Reflexionerna över att detta innanhav, denna insjö är döda, att vågorna är döda, havet eller sjön fattiga, att vägen som börjar här ingenstans leder trots fartygen som kommer in från alla länder (terra nova Ostindiska kompaniet). Denna anstrykning väsentlig för färden uppåt utåt, den spirituella i slutet. Utforma och utvidga betraktandet i samband med min nuv. brygga o. Mölnas. Vågorna är också mina döda.

(Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 260)

Allting som inte skedde
 Allt som till intet ledde-
 Vågornasom blänkter
 Vågor om vilka jag en gång tänkte:
 Ni är en väg ut i världen
 Så långt du önskar bär den

Men den börjar inte-

20. På något vis har bilden av de vita blodkropparnas försvarskrig mot främmande inkräktare bitit sig fast i mig. Detta i förening med andra bilder, vinkar, antydningar och parallellismer från andra håll har hos mig i tanke som känsla så grundligt inpräntat

tanken på den mänskliga organismen som en stat att jag sällan kan föreställa mig mig själv på annat sätt.²⁵

Som du kanske minns skrev jag till dig om eventualiteten av att erbjuda dig en dikt till något av de första höstnumren, i samband med min nya diktsamling. Jag har hållit på och arbetat på den för att om möjligt få den klar för midsommar, men har nu kommit till en punkt med den, då det är omöjligt och kanske farligt att forcera. Jag tror det blir en bra och central [dikt], preliminär titel "Mannen från havet", lång ca. 5-6 kvarto (om inte mer).²⁶

21. Där på stranden,
stod, längre bort, en egendomlig byggnad
begravd i dynerna, av aldrig prägel,
cyklopiiskt byggd av grova stenblock, huggna
i någon geometrisk, prekolumbisk stilart,
en mayabyggnad möjligen...

22. (Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 261)

Ett nyckfullt ögonblick-
och nu är djävulen i klocktornet,
han som stal oss vår framtid,
stal vårt förflutna,

24. Men viktigare i det litterära sammanhanget är en traditionalism av annan art, ett fasthållande vid vissa problem, vissa bilder och upplevelser av personlig art, som ständigt återvänder i hans diktning. Ett exempel: Gunnar Ekelöf iakttog som 13-åring, om man får tro hans egna uppgifter, en bläckfisk uppdragen på stranden av en fiskare vid Promenade des Anglais i Nice. Genom hela hans produktion slingrar sig denna bläckfisk med sina åtta armar och sitt underbara ena öga, tvärs igenom alla stilrevolutioner och omprövningar. En katalog över sådana Ekelöfska temata, hans bildvärld och verbala formler, skulle omfatta en hell volym, och den skulle visa att de flesta av Ekelöfs poetiska framstötter samtidigt är återkomster.³⁰

25. Det var tvenne, skenbart varandra motsatta temperament: den ene objektiv och kontemplativ, den andre subjektiv och extatisk. Den ene ville intet och den andre allt. Så litet behövdes för att eftervärlden skulle anklaga endera och mestadels romaren för verklighetsflykt. För vad är intet och allt mer än två aspekter av samma sak.³²

Det är snarare så att bläckfisken, ett oskyldigt djur, som för människan blivit en det ondas symbol, simmar i vattenytan med sitt underbart konstruerade och välseende öga och bär ett vitt kapell på udden med en liten Theotókos (gudamoder), som råkat bli en för människan god symbol, medan i själva verket hela kampen mellan övan och nedan fortgår oförminskad. . . . Uppfattningarna om ont och gott har urgamla, magiska och säkert inte utforskade skiftningar.³³

26. 'Auri sacra fames'. 'Sacra' betyder förbannad. Uttrycket kommer av en gallisk sedvänja, ty när Massiliensarne hemsöktes av pest brukade någon bland de fattiga erbjuda sig att ett helt år gödas på statens bekostnad och med den renaste föda; därefter smyckades han med heliga örter och heliga kläder, leddes under förbannelser runt hela staten, så att alla dess lidanden måtte komma över hans huvud, och utstöttes sålunda. Detta står att läsa i Petronius.

Gammal kommentator.³⁴

27. -Drömmen-

Archaeopteryx

Mayatemplet vign

Mayatemplet annan vy

28. Om man med det absoluta menar det som är ofattbart för förnuftet, så innehåller världen förvisso ett absolut element. Rörelsen, tiden, vad den nu kallas är fullkomligt oförklarlig. Existerar den fastän den är oförklarlig? Det är svårt att säga, eller snarare det är omöjligt att bevisa denna orationella faktors existens. Vi

stå inför ett olösligt mysterium, det, att icke för tanken kunna bevisa att vi själva leva. I alla fall ha vi då och då en dunkel förnimmelse av att vi leva. Jag tänker; alltså lever jag? Jag känner alltså lever jag? Men det är omöjligt att säga jag känner alltså tänker jag; eller omvänt.³⁸

"Nu" är likamed--"rummet". "Tid och Rum", det är historia (minne) + framtid (hopp, livskraft) och nu, det evigt stillastående ögonblicket, statiskt som rumsbegreppet och samtidigt dynamiskt genom att förtid och framtid möts där. Man kan tänka sig rummet endast under aspektet nu. Och eftersom rörelsen har både med rum och tid att göra uppdelar den sig för tanken i serier av nu-positioner. Utredda detta.³⁹

30. Ensam med vägguret, denna maskin för
 icke-tid
 Vad vet en metronom om musik?
 om vad det är gjord att mäta?
 Dess ansikte är blankt och uttryckslost
 en diskret gudabild
 gör den mig medveten om relativiteternas
 orimlighet
 liv kan inte mätas med död
 musik kan inte mätas med takt
 . . .
 Men vem kan utröna denna livets instinkt
 till död
 Liv skapar död omkring sig, liv kapslar
 in sig i död
 . . .⁴³

31. Det otvetydigaste uttryck jag hos någon annan funnit för en liknande, nästan exakt lika upplevelse, de ända från barndomen ständigt återkommande upplevelserna av tiden dels som ett inre, med astronomisk hastighet rullande, roterande, glödande och krossande feber-

klot, dels som en utvärtes, med lika oändlig långsamhet skridande procession, mina sammanbrott under kontratankar, först dikten i och med nästan hela Sent på jorden, hela Färjesång, halva Non Serviam, hela Mölna-Elegin, också de allra tidigaste dikterna, i Ord och Bild.⁴⁴

32. (Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 234)

Och det röda klotet,
det höga feberklotet, bländande och inflammerat,
kom vältrande över dig, i ena ögonblicket
olidligt hastigt och i nästa outhärdligt långsamt.

(Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 236)

Jag minns

Tiden,
jag har den i mig,
jag bär den i mig som ett stenbarn,
färdig och ofödd-

Det hela försiggår inom en odelbar tidsenhet, låt vara en sekund eller fem minuter, i varje fall en kort stund. Det som händer på sista sidan händer i slutet, och det som står i mitten är närvarande i såväl slut som början[.] Det vill alltså vara ett vertikalsnitt genom alla de olika lagren av samtidigt framflytande tidselement, samtidigt flyter dikten, är i rörelse[.]⁴⁵

33. (Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 239)

Ständigt på väg! Nämn mig den efterblivne,
ett rudiment av den från början givne,
ett fastnaglat moment av något skeende
som bara i sin helhet kan förklara
mitt beteende.

34. Vårt liv är i nuet; de föreställningar om ett förflutet och om ett kommande som förefinnas i vårt medvetande äro blott svaga bilder av verkligheten. Upplever man det förflutna genom att minnas det eller det kommande genom att konstruera det? Vårt liv är ett nu uttänjt genom decennier och livet ett nu uttänjt genom årtusenden. (Jag citerar inte Bergson utan gamla sanningar och var mans egendom).⁴⁷
37. Det vore i själva verket en fängslande uppgift att efterse, huru poesiens tekniska medel avser att just möjliggöra ett sådant upplevande av en enhetsfylld, fortlöpande själslig erfarenhet. . . .
Låt oss tänka på rimmet. . . . Rimmet är någonting närvarande, som visar framåt, men också tillbaka--en liten sak, vari poesien väsen återspeglas: syntesen av förflutet, närvarande och kommande.
Men också assonansen och allitterationen ligger på samma linje.⁵⁵
38. Den drunknades av vattnet renspolade ben uppfattar Ekelöf som ett estetiskt objekt i många sammanhang, t.ex. sviten Havstema i Non serviam och Gerontion i Utflykter. Denna behandling av döden-genom-vatten-motivet har blivit en poetisk allmänning på modet och går (via Eliots Det öde landet) tillbaka till Ariels sång i Shakespeares Stormen. . . .⁵⁷
39. (Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 259)
- alla vi flytande här
flytande kring
o dessa lik som flyter
som vill in i vassen
men vaggas osäkert utanför
40. En annan gång hade han sprungit till fönstret därför att han hört vaktparaden komma. . . . Någonstans vid Gustav III:s staty var det en folksamling som hade någonting underligt för sig. Med en båts-hake fiskade de upp ett oformligt paket ur strömmen--det var ett

fruntimmer som hoppat i från Nörrbro. Hon halades upp med huvudet neråt, de voluminösa, spetsprydda byxorna lyste vita mot kajen, underkjolen hängde ut och invänd som en stor, gråvit klocka med hennes huvud till kläpp.⁶⁰

(Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 249)

Vrakgods på sömnens stränder
 Drömmar som klockklang ur djupen
 Ilanddrivna sillkungar
 Ledsnadens mjuka havsvidunder

41. Ge mig sepiornas ögon
 de milda inåtskådande
 som hörde de hemlig klockklang
 bristande genom djupen

Tidigare hade Ernst Rolf hyrt en del av komplexet som ett slags rekreationsort för sin China-ensemble, och han dog där sömmedelsförgiftad, kanske full, i vattnet t. h. om bryggan, vaktad av en stor trogen och ilsken hund som omöjliggjorde räddningsförsök, enl. ryktet sedan han på platsen överraskat Tutta in flagranti med en Wallenberg, kanske också på grund av leda vid sig själva och dåliga affärer. Jag tror på förgiftningsteorin eftersom vattnet är grunt, den grunde dog på det grunda. Detta är adiaföra men platser har sina öden och öden har sina platser.

43. Vad Strindberg i denna scen dramatiskt antydande gestaltat, är det psykologiska fenomen, som går under namnet livsrevyn. De flesta har hört talas om denna egendomliga psykologiska företeelse, bekräftad av åtskilliga iakttagare, att människor i yttersta livsfara, på gränsen till döden, skulle se framför sig sitt livs händelser som på en snabbfilm.⁶⁶

(August Strindberg, Skrifter, ed. Brandéll, vol. IX, pp. 117-118.)

Han I märkt under tystnaden nattetid eller till och med på ljusa dagen, huru minnena från ert förflutna liv återuppväckta röra på sig, ett i sänder eller gruppvis. Alla felsteg som du begått, alla förbrytelser, alla dumheter; de jaga upp blodet i örsnibbarna på dig, kallsvetten i håret, rysning utefter ryggraden. Du återupplever ditt genomlevda liv ända från födelsen till den dag som inne är; du lider ännu en gång alla genomlidna lidanden, du sväljer alla de kalkar du så ofta tömt till dräggen; du korsfäster ditt skelett när det icke mer finns något kött att korsfästa; du bränner å bålet din själ, när hjärtat är lagt i aska.

Du känner till detta?

Det är Herrens kvarn, som mal långsamt, men mal fint--och svart!⁶⁷

45. Då frågade läkaren
barnflickan som dränkt sig
men väckts med konstgjord andning:
Vad hörde du? Vad såg du?

"Det var så rött och grannt så!"

Nå hörde du något?

"O ja vad dom spelte
dom spelte så vackert!"

46. När jag dör skulle jag som en akt av renlighet vilja bli begravnen i havet, få mina muskler avgnagda, mina inälvor upplösta, mina ben polerade, bli ordentligt badad, balsamerad i stränga saltlösningar intill oigenkännlighet och förintelse. Men det lär kyrkan förbjuda, där den ligger och vaktar på ålderdomshemmet. Den vet vad också vasstrånas larvskal tycks mena och rassla bifall till: att makten över de döda till en viss grad är makten över de levande. Vad säger kontrollstyrelsen om det? Har inte informationsstyrelsen någonting att invända?⁶⁹

47. Ge mig det värdelösa,
 det som har tjänat ut
 och kan återgå till sitt ursprung,
 det som har tjänat nog
 att adlas av glömska och vanvård!
 Lyckliga ting som får vara sig själva,
 vittra och rosta i fred!
 Jag känner för dem.
48. Var det angeläget att 1946 markera tidsanknytningen till den mörkaste perioden av andra världskriget, då de nazistiska arméerna ockuperade Europa, syns det under den långa konceptionsperiodens gång ha blivit vitalare att understryka det tidlösa och allmän-giltiga i den absurdistiska livssynen i verket.⁷¹
49. Svintyskar!
 Och piskrapp och piskrapp på piskrapp.
 Nu kommer polackerna. Låt dem
 ta hand om dem. Bra! Bra!
 Låt oss utrota dem i oss själva . . .⁷³
50. Till dig, som jag inte sett på ett tag, ville jag bara skriva ett par rader om min bok som är till 5/6-färdig. Du minns kanske att jag ringde för någon månad sen och hörde om det fanns möjlighet få ut den i höst. Naturligtvis var det jag som svek--men det är inte underligt, för Elegin är ett arbete så svårt att den tagit mig tio år, i arbetsrepriser visserligen, men ändå.⁷⁷
51. Som det nu är, med min kritik i BLM och andra åtaganden dessutom, får jag kanske en à två dagars tid i månaden att ägna mig åt Mölna-elegin m.m. m.m. och det blir bara hackmat. Jag ville också kunna göra något helt en gång.⁷⁸

52. Jag gitter inte--eller vill snarare inte--slå upp föregående anteckning för att se hur gammal den är, men har en känsla av att en del hänt sen sist.

Alltså: magsåret förstorat trots 8 veckors diet. . . .

Emellertid: arbetat och tänkt på Elegin. Det verkar hoppfullt och jag tycker mig ha en måttfull klar- och översyn vis-à-vis tidigare överarbetningar. Dem blir kanske färdig, trots att det sammanbindande partiet är mig lika eller nästan lika dunkelt som förut.

För att undvika den närsynthet som så lätt infinner sig när man arbetar med en text, inte en tillfällighetsdikt, för jag i dag till Kolmården och Nun. . . .

Vad Elegin beträffar ser jag klart retoriken, det konstlade och gjorda i alltsammans, men tänker att den ändå kan bli ett slags byggnad, låt vara med fiktionskaraktär. Men har någonsin en längre, på ett eller annat sätt sammanhängande dikt varit utan fiktionsin-slaget, det låtsade, det fabricerade, kittet som sammanhåller episoderna? Det enda som kan försona denna förevändning är en oerhörd formstränghet, jämför Dante, jämför hexametern. Jag menar inte att terzinerna eller 6-rytmen i och för sig är formstränghet, men de är bärare av den. Formsträngheten själv ligger på en annan nivå, det är den jag är ute efter, med andra medel. Sedan får episoderna tala.

Men jag förhåller mig skeptisk till det hela. Ingen kan lyckas annat än efteråt. Och det är bara alltför troligt att det hela faller platt, att luften går ur det, som ur romantikens eper. . . .

53. Sommaren har varit mycket svår för Gunnar. Han skulle avsluta en stor diktsamling, kanske sin största (Mölna-Elegien) som han har hållit på med i 20 år, men alltid stupat på. I ett par månader har han nu, drickande, grubblande, olycklig, försökt. Han har läst enormt mycket, arbetat och arbetat, det har blivit flera nya, märkvärdiga dikter, men ingenting färdigt. Han har inte gått ut, knappast nedför trappan, bara suttit på vinden. Och hans problem har en sådan natur, att jag aldrig kan gå ifrån huset. ⁸⁴

55. Ja, nu står jag på den punkten att jag inte vet om jag får färdig Mölna-Elegien i tid för säsongen. Det är färdigt därför att tre ark är uppsatta, klichéerna under arbete och de resterande två arken har jag praktiskt taget klara här. Det är så att säga bara ett bindestreck som fattas. Men i detta fall--nu 23 års arbete--är jag perfektionist och kan inte begära hjälp av någon. Saken är den att jag för ögonblicket känner mig totalt utarbetad, nämligen på ett sådant sätt att jag hellre skulle syssla med något annat, t.ex. skriva ett prosastycke. När man sysslar länge med lyrik, i synnerhet med en sak som denna, blir man på något vis närstynt och detta ger avsmak och leder till depression.⁸⁹
56. Konstens skönhet ligger icke för dem i det avslutade, det fullständiga och symmetriska, utan snarare i det oregelbundna och oavslutade (d.v.s. antydande), som innehåller möjligheten av växande och rörelse. Ingenting undveks mera sorgfälligt i konsten--såväl vid dess skapande som dess utställande--än upprepning och överfyllnad. . . . Det är ju rena motsatsen till vår strävan efter uniformitet och symmetrisk avslutning, vår fallenhet för upprepning.⁹³
57. Ekelöf använder den sexuella relationen mellan man och kvinna som en bild för konstnärens förhållande till konstverket; kärleksparet är två "skapande", två konstnärer som föredrar fragmentet, antydningen, framför det fullbordade, fullkomliga verket.⁹⁴

Där fanns nämligen ett begär efter en fast värld, en fast punkt att stå på och med stöd av vilken man skulle kunna förvandla världen. Denna fasta punkt är en mänsklig illusion som kan tyckas livsnödvändig men som Herakleitos och andra som bekant avböjt. Den uppträder i marxismens patentlösningar av de sociala mer- eller mindre värdesproblemen. Den finns i många arbetshypoteser.⁹⁶

De fiktiva värdeomdömena ha blivit så allena rådande att ingen längre vet vad som är sanning. Alla värdeomdömen är fiktiva och

alla omdömen är värdeomdömen, t.o.m. de vetenskapliga därför att de alltid ha en marginal för godtycke. Det finns ingenting säkert, ingen fast punkt att stå på--allt flyter och förändras. . . .

58.

Det är mig också känt att boken, min första, samtidigt som den vinner i fyllighet, också återtar sin ursprungliga oavslutade karaktär. De rent tekniska villkoren för publicerandet tryckandet av lyrik kommer en, tvingar en, lockar en att dra konstlade gränser, att presentera en diktsamling som ett vunnet resultat, en erövrade ståndpunkt. Men i den lyriska konsten är allting oavslutat och allting inkommensurabelt som i livet. Man kan inte säga: jag är lyckligare nu, jag var olyckligare då.

*Någonting som inte förlorar på att vara mindre tydligt, en

"diktsamling" som om den vore en avslutad enhet.

T.o.m. den enskilda dikten är ett monument som ofta, för att fylla de litterära konventionerna, försetts med lerfötter i form av nödrim eller andra "Ergänzungen", alldeles som statyerna i Vatikanen. Och det länder icke verket till förtjänst att det är författaren, konstnären själv som restaurerat det, så att även restaureringarna kan skryta med att vara "äkta". Författaren, om någon, borde lämna oavslutat det som är oavslutat. Han kan vara ursäktad därigenom att han inte fått det för publiken-beställaren. Men han är i viss mån ansvarig för att publiken bibringats och vidareutvecklat denna fiktion: Det avslutade, i sig självt tillräckliga konstverket. En sådan fiktion hör samman med ett visst halvutvecklat kulturstadium. Vilden tar fram det väsentliga och försummar=överlämnar åt åskådarens fantasi det som i hans vision var oväsentligt eller ofullgånget. De verkligt stora kulturerna och konstepokerna har gjort detsamma, t.ex. de ostasiatiska.

59.

Elegin är som den under förhållandenas tryck kunnat bli: starkt skiktad (eftersom det är 23 års arbete bakom), ändå enhetlig. Hade jag gjort den färdig för tio år skulle den ha blivit annorlunda, får jag tillfälle att revidera den om tio år kommer den att bli annorlunda, troligen skulle jag då söka gripa tillbaka på tidigare och ursprungligare skisser.⁹⁸

60. 1937. Allra första utkastet var 3 rader varav den sista lød "min tiotusende solnedgång". . . . Sedan har elegin oavbrutet växt och växer väl än. Detta är att betrakta som ett nödvändigt men tillfälligt bokslut för att få klarhet över ställningen[.]⁹⁹
61. I poesien ingår gärna ett direkt sövande element. Poeten har i många stycken drag av en hypnotisör, som med vissa speciella grepp förstår att försätta oss i ett slags domning. Det är ett faktum, inför vilket den skenbart överstigliga motsägelse försvinner, som synes föreligga mellan vad Valéry i dikten ovan framhåller och vad han eljest så energiskt går in för, nämligen att poesien som konst kräver av sin utövare högsta vakenhet, högsta medvetande. Som utövare, som hypnotisör måste poeten i hög grad vara vaken, mäktig en okuvlig vilja, men samtidigt måste han känna till det läge, varii han vill försätta läsaren, d. v. s. han måste själv ha prövat den saliga likgiltigheten vid poesiers bröst.¹⁰²
62. bör sammanfatta, göra distinkt hörbart vad som sägs i mig: så "distinkt" att även det dunkelt, osäkert kända får vara dunkelt, osäkert som det är, så länge det är det. Klarheten, sakligheten är inte att ge det klara som vore det självklart, problemfritt, utan att ge den dunkla, progressiva vägen mot klarhet.¹⁰³
63. De som vill att poesien skall gå bestämda ärenden och framföra dem på ett koncist och klart språk, så att de inte skall behöva sväva i tvivelsmal, brukar känna sig illa berörda eller åtminstone tveksamma inför dessa slags dikter. . . . Södergrans dikt är associativ och den måste läsas associativt annars ger den inte ifrån sig av sina hemligheter. Sin innersta hemlighet kommer den aldrig att ge, i det avseendet är den ett gulnat brev vars gåta ägarinnan tagit med sig i graven. Men är det iisjälva verket meningen att dikt skall säga mer av det osägbara än just detta att det är osägbart?¹⁰⁶

Ändå har denna dikt ett stort och mycket bestämt ärende. Den vill ge en levnadsstämning. . . . inte levnadsstämningens resultat och derivat uttryckta i klara verba, utan levnadsstämningen själv. Och liksom i livet tanke föder känsla och känsla tanke och nyckfulla associationer glittrar på ytan av minnandets lugnare ström med dess djup av resignation och ödesförtrogenhet, så sker det också i dikten.¹⁰⁷

64. Man har gjort sitt bästa att förstöra detta stora diktpanorama-- jag talar inte enbart om "Det öde landet", utan lika mycket om de många dikterna före och efter--genom att dissekera det och söka lokalisera alla dolda citat och hänsyftningar, av vilka en del mycket väl kan vara omedvetna, åtminstone i ingivelseögonblicket. Man skall läsa det som en levnadsstämning, en livsfris. Det är alltid pusslet som är originellt. . . .¹⁰⁸

Er metod att låta de nya bilderna "explodera bredvid varandra i väl avvägda doser", tyckes mig inte tillräckligt beakta koncentrationsprincipen. Det händer lätt att bilderna inte explodera tack vare att de eliminera varandra. För att en dikt skall göra verkan fordras att man iakttar en viss hushållning med medlen. Otydlighetens tjusning gömmer sig bakom varje med kraft och konst framställd bild, ett massuppbud av bilder leder lätt till att föreställningarna och associationerna, som bilderna skola framkalla, utebli emedan mångfalden av bilder hindrar den enskilda bilden att utöva hela sin verkan alldeles som en sammanpackad boskapshjord hindrar de enskilda djuren i deras rörelsefrihet. Det är inte nog med att dikten har en musikalisk linje, plastisk åskådlighet. Och åskådligheten kan inte vinnas på annat sätt än genom en ytterligt välberäknad hushållning av medlen--för min del tror jag att denna bäst nås genom återhållsamhet och en väl beräknad stegring i uttrycket--denna återhållsamhet ger dessutom "den otydlighetens tjusning" som Ni så riktigt observerat att en dikt bör äga för att göra verkan och vara sant poetisk. Otydlighetsprincipen har ju redan iakttagits av kineserna och jag påminner mig att även Goethe framhållit den.¹⁰⁹

65. Vad som gör att man kan nämna C. o F. i så gott som samma andedrag (o. i bakgrunden Hj. S.) är att de båda ha en konstnärlig egenhet som man gärna vill kalla speciellt svensk: att via detaljer skapa en helhetsstämning. Detta är påfallande så väl hos C. som F.¹¹¹
66. Nästan alla våra betydande författare har varit impressionister när de varit som bäst. Ibland har man också kallat dem realister. Naturligtvis säger ingendera etiketten nog, men att de varit impressionister kommer nog sanningen närmast. De har arbetat med ett slags verklighetsförkortning som i själva verket inneburit en uppförstoring av verkligheten, ett försök att se det öververkliga via detaljerna. I Röda Rummet är det inte Falk eller Lilljans-kretsen som är huvudpersonerna utan Legion själv, samhället, tidsandan med dess trivsel någon gång eller vantrivsel mest. Att kritisera Strindberg för att Falk inte hänger ihop som person är därför i djupare mening lika oberättigat som att kritisera Bellman för att inte Fredman, Ulla, Movitz eller Mollberg hänger ihop. Ullas ansikte skildras sällan eller aldrig, däremot hennes "miner", kläder, rörelser, kåta eller graciösa, atmosfären kring henne. Figurerna blir på så sätt många Ullor, Fredmänner, Movitzar, och det är fel om man påstår att kollektivdikt skulle vara någonting nytt hos oss. Men samma figurer blir också vars och ens Ulla, Fredman, Movitz, så det vore lika fel om man påstod att individualismen inte blivit tillgodosedd.
- Detta impressionistiska sätt att dikta, detta svävande mellan den konkreta detaljen och det öververkliga hela har alltid i förstone väckt kritik från den majoritet av läsare som håller på fakticitet, följdriktiga händelseförlopp, smusförnuft, moral och reson. Den kritiken har, allom bekant, inte tystnat i dag: den riktar sig mot s.k. "svåra" författare, sådana som fordrar aktiv medverkan av läsarna, ställer anspråk på deras eget fantasiarbete. . . .
67. Dessa ord ger melodin, men på sådant sätt att de tvingar läsaren till ackompanjemang. Han får bestå kontrapunkten. Det finns inte två människor som förstår ett musikstycke på samma sätt och det

kommer inte att finnas två människor som förstår en dikt av
Södergran på samma sätt. . . .¹¹³

Man kan förstå och beundra en dikt som man inte kan översätta.
Där är man receptiv. Man kan förstå och beundra en dikt och upp-
täckta att den går att översätta. Där är man medskapande. Att
även receptivitet innebär ett slags medskapande vet jag. Men det
är inte nog. När man verkligen är medskapande beror det på att den
andra dikten kommer en att plötsligt upptäckta sig själv, öppnar ett
källsprång som man säger. Det är därför mina egna dikter ibland
innehåller citat. Det är inte citat, det är identifikation, dikt-
fragment som jag gjort till mina egna, så restlöst att jag ibland
inte kan skilja det från sådant som är mitt eget, om nu sådant
finns, vilket jag ibland tvivlar på. Ty allt mänskligt hänger till
den grad samman eller är till den grad intrasslat i vartannat att
talet om mitt och ditt åtminstone mystice förefaller mig vara få-
fångt tal.¹¹⁴

68. "Nu torde någon säga", hur skulle någon kunna mäta just det
sköna i en sak? Jag har påstått att man kommer att kunna förstå,
rent intellektuellt, varför en sak är vackrare än en annan. Det
som man kallar det sköna hos en sak ligger inte hos själva saken
utan hos den som ser den. Det sköna och det som liknar konstnärens
ursprungliga tanke, ligger inte i själva tinget. Ett konstverk
har nått sitt mål först då det återföddes i betraktarens sinne.
Konstverket självt är dött. Konstverket självt är bara en död
utgångspunkt som för den rätte åskådaren till den stämning konst-
nären åsyftat, som innehåller en viss av sin upphovsman åsyftad
möjlighet.¹¹⁵

I uppsatsen har du inlagt några lärda saker som inte jag vet om:
De Groot och Yang och Ying. Men varför inte visa sin lärdom, och
jag är till hela min skapnad demokrat: alltså: läsaren, tolkaren
skall ha rätt att lägga in sitt. Detta är nödvändigt. Och det är
klassisk i äkta mening.¹¹⁶

69. Infogandet av den i sig själv slutna vulgärlatinska citatmassan i den tidigare helt litterära strukturen har medfört en oväntad kontrapunktisk effekt. Ekelöf, som alltid varit intresserad av den rent typografiska utformningen av sina dikter, arrangerar det fristående latinska textblocket i verkets mittparti på vänstersidor och den egna texten på högersidor på samma sätt som är brukligt i vetenskaplig edition av t. ex. klassiska texter med simultanöversättningar. Läsaren skall tydligen suggereras till att uppleva, att det råder såväl identitet som simultanitet mellan de bägge textblocken.¹¹⁸

71. Idée, à ce qu'il me semble de première importance.

L'Élégie commence calmement

[. . .]

mais vers les pp 10 ou peut-être 15 avec des vides, la page à gauche par exemple et puis un tas de coquilles ou plutôt graffiti (voir ceux de Pompei), des poèmes grotesques ou lubriques, des phrases depourvu de sens, même dans mon alphabet. Une espèce de pluie de Léonides, störningar

Poèmes: Pepparrot

När en kejsare

Från barnbyn

Serierna

Graffitis: I går tog jag Elsa etc.

Kuk

Karnalattasprache

En Mölne-Elegi / om det anses lämpligt att den medtages. Den får i så fall inte sättas på annat sätt än den är i originaluppl. eller åtminstone så snart som möjligt. Det betyder att alla vita utrymmen (pauser) måste bibehållas. Någon ensuite-sättning kan inte komma i fråga.¹²¹

72. Ingenstädes spelar pauser, uppehåll, tysta parenteser en sådan roll som i poesien. Överhuvud äger interpunktionen för den en ojämförlig betydelse. Ingen skall säga att det här är fråga om "tomrum" eller "luckor" i den poetiska strömmen, ty det är intensiva ögonblick, fulla av liv, ett slags uppsamlingspunkter för det som gått förut eller kanske vi hellre skall säga ett slags fullbordande moment för den förvandling, som av ordens mosaikstycken gör en odelbar enhet upplevd som ett enda närvarande nu.¹²²

De dikttitlar Ni citerar--på Mölna brygga, Büljesång, Återfarten etc. etc.--är i själva verket bara ett slags marginalnotiser. Dikten är en. Titeln på det valda avsnittet bör vara "Ur En Mölna-Elegi / Inledningen". Det sista av denna avdelning utgörs av en parentes "(rida. vanföra älvor dansar)". Den bör strykas. Avsnittet måste i övrigt sättas med iakttagande av samma 'pauser' (större och mindre vita mellanrum) som i originalupplagan. Så har texten blivit satt även i den i våras utkomna upplagan av Vår svenska lyriken (den s.k. blomsterupplagan). Detta är ett oeftergivligt villkor, och jag ber att få kasta ett öga på korrakturet.¹²³

74. Det är en grandios tanke i detta avsnitt, där röster från svunna århundraden och skilda folk anmäler sig vid den stora mönstringen, röster från Frankrike, England, Amerika, Norge, Portugal, Island, Grekland och Orienten. Men nog måste man säga att den lärde skalden är ganska odemokratisk såtillvida, att han förutsätter en vida större litterär bildning hos sin publik än man rimligen har rätt att begära. Ingen mer än skalden själv kan fullt uppfatta de många stämmornas raffinerade ekoverkan; . . . Metoden att berika en dikts stämningsvärld genom till hälften dolda citat kan ha mycket att ge--Ekelöf har väl lärt sig uppskatta den främst hos T. S. Eliot--men att skalden i detta fall gått för långt har han själv insett och därför också sedermera strukit partiet. . . .¹²⁵

Och varför skulle jag ha assimilerat ett citat lika bra som Stravinskij? Tänk på Dante! Tänk på hur Orpheus och Eurydike uppenbarar sig i andantet i Mozarts A-durkonsert. Och jag är övertygad om att Gluck i sin tur fått citatet någon annanstans ifrån. Efterapningar gäller inte, men traditionen som är stor och obruten, den gäller. M.m.¹²⁷

75. Ekelöfs text kan sägas likna en hundkyrkogård. Men vad som ligger begravt där är naturligtvis främst anspelningar och citat, från "Höga visan" till Swedenborgs drömboksblad i originalstavning, från Bellman till Södergran. Och självfallet (av artighet mot läsaren?) utan citationstecken. . . .¹³⁰

76. Citattekniken-- . . . --den har också sina sidor, för var går egentligen gränsen mellan legitimt utnyttjande och stöld i detta fall?

Man frågar sig detta med särskild oro, inte därför att Ekelöf skulle ha begravt sig själv under citatens lapptäcke utan tvärtom: därför att han har en så kuslig förmåga att med sammanhangets suggestion ge även de mest främmande citat en "omisskännligt Ekelöfsk" prägel. Man kan faktiskt--jag har tidigare gjort det själv--läsa "En Mölna-Elegi" som om den med gammalstavningar och allt inte innehöll några citat alls, och detta talar förstås, poetiskt sett, till Ekelöfs förmån.¹³¹

Naturligtvis vet jag nu, 'var lugn mitt barn / det finnes ingenting' är Södergran, inte Ekelöf. Men när jag väl läste dessa rader hos Södergran, slog det mig hur ouppblösligt förbundna de var med 'Mölna', och jag tror jag förstår varför de, i det sammanhang där jag först lärde känna dem, fick en sådan egendomlig verkan. Inte längre Södergranfragmentet själv (det var väl aldrig så), utan just denna epilog, denna livssituation. Om det var ett dåligt betyg åt min litteraturkännedom, var det det motsatta till Er dikt: den är Er egen, inte dess fragments och reminiscensers. Jag vet inget mer exempel än Stravinsky, där en konstnär lyckats så full-

ständig transformera ett "främmande" material, göra det till något nytt, unikt, personligt.¹³²

78. ma in questo caso entra evidentemente in gioco il rilassamento dell'attenzione: una sorta d'abitudine allo stimolo, per cui da un lato i segni che lo compongono, a furia di essere messi a fuoco--come un oggetto troppo guardato o una parola il cui significato ci siamo rappresentati più e più volte ossessivamente--ingenerano una sorta di sazieta e appaiono ottusi (là dove esiste solo una ottusità temporanea della nostra sensibilità); e d'altro canto, trascinati dal meccanismo dell'abitudine, i ricordi che convogliamo nell'atto percettivo anzichè essere un prodotto fresco della memoria eccitata si costituiscono come schemi, riassunti dei ricordi convogliati precedentemente. Si blocca qui il processo di fruizione estetica e la forma, come viene considerata, viene risolta in uno schema convenzionale in cui la nostra sensibilità troppo a lungo provocata vuole riposarsi.¹³⁵

82. Och det är sant som numera sägs:
 [Man säger ingenting nytt då man säger]
 Konstverket är oberoende av konstnären
 lever sitt eget liv inom sin egen ram
 i sitt eget ljus, i sin egen tonalitet
 Det visste de gamle som förhöll sig anonyma.

Det objektiva och subjektiva i konsten? Måste båda finnas. Ingen kan vara objektiv utan en omfattande kulturhistorisk skolning, endast på grundval av den kan han fastställa sina valfrändskaper, träffa sitt val--bli subjektiv. Enbart subjektivitet är--om den alls är möjlig i konsten--ett slags hållningslöst tyckmyckeri. Enbart objektivitet är eklekticism och improduktivitet. En konstnärs hållning kan varken vara det ena eller det andra, den är relativ. Alltså en relativ objektivitet vars modifierande komponent är en relativ subjektivitet=en strävan efter jämvikt mellan tradition och

nyskapande. Framför allt gäller att börja från början, genomgå alla fosterstadier för att bli människa. Ingen själ, inte ens Mozarts, föds färdig. Den har att genomgå en andra gestation, efter den fysiska.

Denna organiska utveckling kan inte precipiteras. Man kan inte hoppa över 7 klasser i den skolan och vara färdig student med det samma (vilket man kanske med fördel skulle kunna göra i den andra skolan "lärdomsskolan", men även livets långsamhet och tvånget att traggla genom klasserna med de sämsta, alltså enhetsskolan, har sin funktion).

85. Det finns i Sverige, vis à vis litteraturen, en ovanligt stor traditionslöshet. En bildad svensk av i dag vet inte av sin faders älsklingsförfattare, ännu mindre av de äldre generationernas. Om man jämför med England, Amerika, Frankrike, Tyskland, Spanien etc. så har det produktiva förhållande mellan generation och generation fått ett annat utseende hos oss. ¹⁴⁸

86. (Nathan / Larson, p. 155)

Så vänd dig, lutande, hostande poet
 mot den unge som ojämförligt trakterade zittra
 och du oldtfru
 mot henne som vävde bröllopslakanen
 Vänd dig, målare, mot den tid
 då du grundade själv dina dukar
 och själv rev din färg
 och du, skulptör,
 mot den tid då du själv barfota trampade leran
 Vänd tillbaka, fiskare
 till stranden som lärde dig fiska

87. Självmordsdikt . . . Självmordsdikt plus en nästan museal stämning. Vilket intryck kan inte de stora muséernas sarkofagsamlingar och andra vestigia vitae mortisque göra på sinnet en grå söndag med

klockringning, besökarens dröjande ekosteg och den tidiga eftermiddagens livsleda. Det vilar ett tjockt kulturdamm över vårt liv. . . .

Det estetiska formarvet har en ofrånkomlig karaktär av kapital. Analogt med kapitalbildning kan man tala om kulturbildning och analogt med kapital om kulturarv. . . . Ändå är det otvivelaktigt att åtskilligt modern konst ur allä andra synpunkter än samlarens när och överträffar de antika mästare, som kapitaliserats i museisalar och kabinett. Det traditionsbundna samlandets process hämnar livets spontana skapande. . . .

Och under formens kompakta, vördnadsbjudande valv, som vilar på hans axlar, står konstnären liten och rädd att göra sig urarva. Han nöjer sig med det förflutna som den illitterate med det tryckta ordet. Han trivs med traditionens bekväma förmyndarskap som den sjuke med sina tvångsföreställningar.¹⁵²

88. Att leva är inte samma sak som att äga--en plats, en förmögenhet, en stil, en kultur. Man äger inte sitt liv, man skapar det. Den kultur tidningarna var dag söker övertala oss att äga är oss en kvarnsten om halsen, kultur är inte förflutet, fast, orubbligt utan förändras ständigt mot en viss framtid, nyskapas, nybildas som huden på människans kropp, växer ur sin medelpunkt livet, innehållet ut mot periferien det förflutna, idealet, där den småningom faller bort som hårdnad hornhud. På så sätt är bildernas liv detsamma som livets bilder, men hela livets, inte bara de delar den mänskliga osäkerheten idealiserat för att skaffa sig ett imaginärt stöd, ett halmstrå människan krampaktigt håller fast i i stället för att simma.¹⁵³

90. Den uppfattn. av antiken som debiterats hela eftertiden men särsk fr.o.m. Winckelmann, Goethe, Ehrensvärd här, m.a.o. nyklassicismen är enl. min mening grundfalsk. Visst fanns det senatorer, talare, historieskrivare, filosofer t.o.m. en och annan kejsare som uppträdde i hög ton i stil med "Edle Einfält u. stille Grösse" . . .

Men sanningen är att själve Cato d.ä. hade slavfarmer för produktion och prokreation till avsalu av nazistisk typ. . . . "De ädla romarna", jo, jag tackar, det har aldrig funnits värre pöbel. . . .¹⁵⁷

Vad Winckelmann och andra svärmare--eller skolfuxar--och med dem vi kommit att kalla för antiken, den klassiska antiken är bara den officiella eller officiösa delen av detta stora kulturkomplex. Vad vi kallar Medeltiden fanns inneboende redan i detta, både med sitt svärmeri, sitt fromhetsliv och sin obskurantism. Det fanns som en underström, men den gick ofta upp till ytan. Dessutom var denna antika medeltid i hög grad folkets livssyn och religion-- och har så förblivit. "Antikens" död sammanhänger med det härskande skiktets upplösning och bortfall samt med uppstigandet av ett annat härskande skikt som övertog och i sin tur tillämpade den övliga metoden och praktiken av damnatio memoriae: "Riven ned det, riven ned det ända till grunden."¹⁵⁹

91. Det förekommer mig ibland som om de romerska retorernas tal aldrig blivit hållna, liksom inte heller de fingerade talen hos historie-skrivarna. Vad som sades från rostra var något betydligt mera allmänbegripligt, tror jag. Sedan har Cicero och andra suttit sig ner och knäpat ut talen på en konstprosa som aldrig var talat ord och som få skulle ha begripit. Så var det latin vi får lära oss "dött" redan i klassisk tid. . . .

Om kontinuiteten i människosläktets / undermedvetna historia . . .
 Undermedvetet dvs. utanför festtalarnas / krets har ett slags sanning hållit / sig vid liv. . . . Antiken har aldrig upphört leva ett hemligt / liv trots Winckelmann eller Thorvaldsen / Att förneka det klassiska arvet är ung. som / när en patient söker borttränga / sitt förflutna--det dyker upp i de / drömmar han ev. berättar för en ev / psykoanalytiker . . .¹⁶⁰

92. Vad hjälper det en vilsen och trilsksk gymnasist att han vet något om förnuftsdyrkan, utilism och den borgerliga revolutionens idéer när han läser Kellgren eller fru Lenngren? Han kommer bara att se snusförnuft och torftig sensmoral. Ge honom i stället tiden, dess umgängeston, klädedräkt bland hög och låg, gatsmuts och odörer, ekipager, musik, även slagdängor, måleri, även krogskyltar, könsmoralen, formen på glasen, dekoren på tallrikarna, matrecept, sotarpojknarnas rop, skeppen på Strömmen eller Älven, dagens on dits och bon mots, och ge honom det öskådligt. . . .¹⁶¹
93. Makt är surrogat. Ju längre tid som går, desto överkligare ter sig de stora skådespelarna medan människan består. Vad finns det kvar av Alexander. Inte hundra delen av den under sin levnad obskyre Sokrates. Detsamma kommer med tidens hjälp att bli fallet med Napoleon och Hitler. Att inte tala om halvmesyrrer som Mussolini. Att "inte vara mer än människa", det är en stolt uppgift.¹⁶³
- Vilka gödselhögar är inte de flesta stora män i historien. Se på dags dato och säg vad ni ideologiskt och så vitt möjligt privat tycker om dem som historien tänker göra stora. Nej, de goda, hederliga och gedigna har sällan lyckats komma in i sällskapet, det finns säkert en uppsjö på helt och hållet obskyra öden av mänskligt gediget slag. Söka ut exempel på monstruösa l. dumma personer som fått hallstämpel av historien.¹⁶⁴
94. De båda Lilljebjörnarna, far och son, är emellertid långt mindre romantiska än både Geijer och Lagerlöf och tycks mig just därför i högre grad förtjäna epitetet klassiska. De är dessutom något ovanligt i Sverige, nämligen människoskildrare, -älskare och -kännare. Sveriges historia är inte för dem förkroppsligad i "dess konungars" eller mer eller mindre osannolika kavaljerers utan enkla brukspatroner, eller yrkesmilitärer och fältjägarerna eller andra vanliga människors. . . . Svenska diktares skildringar av gammalt vardagsliv har ett romantiserande drag som gör det hela överkligt, fantastiskt. Gösta Berling var inte så genial och kungarna var inte så dominerande. . . .¹⁶⁶

95.

Det är egendomligt att iaktta folks, särskilt vetenskapsmäns förhållande till interferensproblemet myt/saga-verklighet. Schliemann var övertygad om att ha funnit Agamemmons m.fl. gravar. Blegen får det inte att stämma med brandlagren i Troja. Victor Bérard är övertygad om att Odysseus---en faktisk, historisk Odysseus alltså--kastades i land på stranden s. om Palaiokastritsa på Kerkyra. Jag vill minnas att det är han som t.o.m. exakt sökt beräkna en segelförsedd flottas drift från Malta dit till 16 dagar. Han ser i Odysseen en exakt compte-rendu, något av en loggbok eller journal. Förhållandet är naturligtvis det att myt och empirisk verklighet ingått ett heligt äktenskap i dikten. Odysseus är ett typ-öde. Samtidigt med att det mycket väl kan ha funnits en "historisk" Odysseus har det funnits många. Samtidigt med att det kanske funnits en Agamemnon har det funnits många. Deras äventyr och gärningar kan ha varit "historiska" men samtidigt är de mönster för äventyr och gärningar av likartat slag. Att reducera dikten till en (av div. fabler övervuxen) faktiskt timad verklighet, det är inte alls första mekaniken i det mänskliga, allmänmänskliga själslivet. Dikt och saga talar ofta sanning, arkeologiskt påtaglig och konstaterbar sanning. Men att reducera den till enbart detta är en kortsynthet utan like, en ren skrivbordskonstruktion. För denna dikt gäller alla som varit i sjönöd, alla som supit sig fast i hamnar, alla maktgalna och i sin maktgalenhet tvehägsna och i sin tvehägsenhet arroganta, självhävande, listiga, understucket laborerande med "det möjligas (eller omöjligas) konst." Kan det konstateras att den eller den verkligen levat är det intressant men inte mer. Det är intressant att det efter århundraden och årtusenden av muntlig eller skriftlig förmedling ännu finns en kärna av sanning, historiskt. Men det verkligt intressanta är att dessa öden under så lång tid engagerat så många anonyma. Dikt är en högre grad av sanning, en allmänneligare grad, inte mindre historisk därför att den är knuten till så många namnlösa vidarebefordrare, utsmyckare och ofta förvrängare. . . .

Lika illa dömer de som slår bort alla "historiska" spekulationer med att de homeriska dikterna "bara" är myter, fria fantasier utan rot i verkligheten.

Dikt är verklighet och saga sammanparade. . . .

99. Förstå antiken, återuppleva den fordrar utom kopiösa studier en så total omställning, en sådan identifikation snarare än inlevelse, att den är få förunnad.

Antiken är helt annorlunda. Och vad man måste är att koppla bort mer än 2000 år och se framtiden--ljus eller mörk kan göra detsamma--ur deras synpunkt.¹⁷⁰

Det är visserligen sant att denna framtid blev "kristendomen" och att kristendomen till stor del är en omformad antik. Men den är därför inte någon arvtagare av antiken annat än högst medelbart, i flera, ofta dunkla led. Och ändå fanns de flesta av de idéer och religiösa beteendemönster, som skulle bli kristendomens, redan hos de gamle. Men annorlunda, aningslösa om denna framtid, som, f.ö. "om inte om hade varit", hade kunnat bli en helt annan. Det är denna potentialitet hos antiken man måste kunna uppleva och förstå, det duger inte att se den i något slags bakåtbelysning, hela tiden med en baktanke på hur det sedan blev och vilka öden vi gått igenom. Nej, man måste på något mystiskt vis vara mitt i denna förflutna tid för att fatta den och inte alls vid Thermopyle eller med Sokrates, utan i ett vanligt hem med dess husaltare och torftiga möblering, eller vid ett vanligt symposion, där man inte alls presterade några djupsinnigheter utan kanske nöjde sig med attiska scholier av den typ som Athenaios meddelat.

100. Så epigoniserar Lundkvist, kanske intet anande--Picasso (i Agadir). Men Picasso är en personifikator-normalisator av Medelhavsvärldens myter. Hos Lundkvist står så bara kvar vad han förmått se i detta: den förvridna attityden, grinet, grimasen och det exceptionella tillfället. Därför är han journalist. Hos Martinson däremot finns mycket mer, en verklig traditionstillhörighet, om också inte så mycket sammanhållning. Men kanske början till ett hela jorden omfattande kulturmedvetande av samma slag som det en gång omfattande Medelhavet.

De är två typer för resenären-luffaren* [*och sagoberättaren]; den refererande och den in- och medkännande; den som i grunden är utanför och den som är inom.¹⁷¹

101. Det händer ibland då jag ligger och inte kan sova på sängen med tassar av brons, under lampan som tiger att jag hör slavarna tassla och viska i närheten-
 . . .
 Ibland när jag vaknar till ur min sömn eller dvala är det som om någon just hade rört vid mig som om någon tafatt sökt stryka mig över handen.
- Jag är nämligen övertygad om att en översättare--och särskilt en översättare av främmande lyrik--för att kunna göra ett tillfredsställande arbete måste ha en sträng spänd i samma ton som grundtonen hos den diktare han tolkar. Saknas samklangens är varje försök meningslöst. Det är i första hand den starka sympatien som betingar allt omskapande och allt urval.¹⁷⁴
102. Den som skrivit litteraturkritik vet: en god, givande artikel kan man knappt skriva om den inte handlar om en bok som man sympatiserar med, som är god och givande just för en själv. En dålig, osympatisk, meningslös artikel skriver man knappast om någon annan bok än den som förefaller en osympatisk och tom. Eller likgiltig, meningslös. Någon objektiv litteraturkritik finns inte, åtminstone inte för mig. Jag är subjektiv och måste försvara min subjektivitet.
103. Vad beträffar mitt antikstudium är det naturligtvis också besynnerligt, osystematiskt och tillmätt efter mina behov, inte efter någon vetenskaplig grund. . . . På antiken, som når oss bara som skärvor och viskningar, gäller det att ha antingen 1) en personlig syn, 2) en stratigrafisk syn sådan som de utomordentliga amerikanska arkeologerna, annars har man ingen.¹⁷⁸
104. Det finns också sidor av P. och antiken i övrigt som är intressanta, men de fordrar en moralisk frisynthet, eller snarare ett psykiatriskt-kliniskt intresse, som jag inte heller kan göra reda för.

Att ta sig auktoritet är inte min sak, när så mycket av vad vi "vet" om antikens människotyp är rena hypoteser, som det tycks mig.¹⁷⁹

106. Läst om min ungdoms Hans Alienus, dock endast bläddrande. Som Strbg sade: en pekoralsymfoni. Men den innehåller, trots det sjuka, ändå mkt. . . . Men när det gäller Grekland, Rom etc. står han kvar på Winckelmanns ståndpunkt. Och det Vatikanska fikonlövet sitter där prydligt.¹⁸⁷
107. Religiositeten är alltså projektionen, blomman eller fruktén, vad som med en tråkig term kallas sublimeringen.
- Under den och som förutsättning finns myllan, växtkraften, drifter, begäret.
- Den som förnekar det könsliga består inte naturens prov då det gäller det inneboende gudomliga.
- Han blir teolog, dogmatiker, fanatiker.
- Den som överdriver det könsliga har också han en sterilitet inom sig.
- "Det var fruktan som först skapade gudar i världen"--diktaren snuddar här vid en oss välbekant religionshistorisk tanke--men nu är var och en i färd med att dikta sig gudar efter egna intressen, gudar som han kan skylla på eller ursäkta sig med.¹⁹⁰
108. Tyvärr har Petronius råkat i skymundan--det har skett på grund av en sakta men säkert verkande propaganda som satt honom på index, fränkant honom varje moralisk bevekelsegrund, pådyvlat honom en tom, ytlig och meningslös elegans som han inte har och gjort honom till den pornograf som han enligt kulturhistoriska bedömningsgrunder inte är.¹⁹²

109. Nordiska museet med allt sitt plotter av yverborna kuriosa är en rest av den oscariska mjödhornsörfalskningen. Bygg upp ett kök från 1700-talet och låt folk sätta sig i det. Gör en salong och inte av idel sällsynta eller praktpjäser och förse den med en ljudfond av spökligt, halvslött kallprat. Låt det trovärdiga minnet fungera, som en illustration, en verkligt illuderande sådan. Låt besökaren pröva på saltmaten och det halvhärskna, det svår-tuggade brödet (två bak pr år).¹⁹³
110. I Raiivola, i Södergrans rum satt enkla konstreproduktioner, hämtade ur billiga jul- eller veckotidningar uppklistrade på de bågnande tapeterna. Även annorstädes har Södergran visat en viss förkärlek för vad man skulle vilja kalla commonplaces i sin samtids bildvärld, och Tizians tavla var på sätt och vis en av dem om den också inte var ett verk av tiden annat än ur reproduktionssynpunkt. Det är ingen svaghet hos henne, ty hon använder alltid dessa ofta ödmjuka, för mängden beräknade illustrationer till mänsklighetens eviga söndags- och paradisdrom, till drömmen om "den gränslösa lyckan", för att kontrastera dem mot andra bilder av torftigheten i människans vardagsvillkor och det förtvivalade i hennes kamp. "En blåare himmel och en mur med rosor eller en palm och en ljummare vind" ur "Ingenting" är helt i stil med tidens sentimentala dekorations- eller illustrationsideal, sådant det förekom i restaurangmatsalar och novellmagasin.¹⁹⁶
111. Vi får inte glömma att vad vi betraktar som litterär konst bara beror på en överenskommelse som ständigt revideras. . . . Och den som bärs av detta anonyma som somliga kallat livskänsla och andra personlighet--han må sedan vara författare eller läsare, trädgårdsodlare eller fiskare--honom är det obetaget att som japanerna se skön konst i en av havet skulpterad sten eller lyrik i en blomsterkatalogs offerter. Det är bara smakfilistrarna som anser att konst nödvändigtvis måste vara någonting som är gjort efter de akademiska spelreglerna. . . .¹⁹⁷

Det finns oerhört vackra saker som aldrig blivit presenterade med anspråk på att vara konst, och som därför blivit betraktade mest som kuriositeter t.ex. maskiner, som det för 30 år sedan inte skulle ha fallit någon in att försöka se någon skönhet i. Ett ting blir ett "konstverk" först då det faller någon in att möta det, att gå emot det med begär att förstå det som sådant, att uppbjuda en viss lyrism för att se det sköna i det. Högst kultiverade nationer såsom kineser och japaner ha insett detta långt före oss. Den siste kinesiske kejsaren hade en stor samling egendomligt formade naturföremål. I Japan voro vackra kiselstenar högt betalda.

Skulptören Brancusi är en av dem som nu för tiden försöker göra dylik konst. Hans strävan är fullt berättigad. Det vore i själva verket fullkomligt berättigat om ett vackert snöklätt berg eller en vacker havsstrand betalades med lika högt pris som en Michelangelo eller en Raffael eller vad de heta. F.ö. borde de betalas högre. (de förra). Norge kommer att bli ett ytterligt värdefullt land med tiden. Låtom oss vara tacksamma att leva i en tid då vi ännu kunna njuta dylika skönhetsvärden så gott som gratis.¹⁹⁸

113.

Så sade jag mig:

De enda diktare jag bryr mig om
 är de som bär försiktigt
 med nervösa händer
 en skål full med blod
 i vilken en droppe mjölk har fallit
 eller en skål full med mjölk
 i vilken en droppe blod har fallit . . .
 Nu har jag sett, nu vill jag se
 det fasta greppet om en bräddfull skål
 med källvatten.

Av den konst som vi vant oss att kalla romantisk tycker jag mer och mer om det enkla, det som förlorat sin éclat och blivit banalt. Det som kallas dålig smak har något oändligt rörande och vackert i sig därför att det förlorat alla pretensioner på att vara

konst. Jag har tröttnat på allt som presenteras som konstens sista ord. . . . Torvaldsens Kristus är rörande vacker på väggen i ett enkelt rum med emmastolar och symaskin. Färgtryck ur jultglädje. Jules Verne, Marryat, detektivromaner. . . .¹⁹⁹

114. De döda och deras upplevelser, allmänmänskliga, vardagliga är vårt minne, historiskt sett[.]

Vad bryr jag mig om årtal eller Sveriges kungars stövlar.

Därför söker jag mig till vad som skrivits i brev- och memoärer- dag-böcker av "vanligt enkelt folk[.]", till deras vardag och söndag.²⁰⁰

I dagliga livet ger ju allt associationer till allt, allt hänger samman. Det är inte bara toner som associera till toner, tankar till tankar: då skulle ju universum vara splittrat i ett otal kategorier[.]

Det är egendomligt detta principiella avståndstagande till blandad konst som numera tycks vara god smak. Jag kan medge att praktiskt i de flesta fall, men ... praktiskt är dock all emotionell upplevelse i livet betingad av denna rörelsefrihet mellan konstarterna. En konstnär vars själ är stängd för någon av dem måste sannolikt ha någon defekt som konstnär och den som endast kan en sak blir obevekligt en Arnold Ljungdal. Men även om det av praktiska skäl är konstarterna förbjudet att mötas och sammansmälta till en enda, praktiskt, så gör de det ändå på scenen i vårt inre. . . .²⁰²

115. Å andra sidan ger konkretionen måleriet perspektiv, musiken programmatik, d.v.s. litterär prägel. På det hela taget har all konst en strävan att smälta samman med annan, att i en möjligast fyllig förening ge till resultat någonting som närmar sig universal-konsten.

Denna universalkonst som hägrat sedan urminnes tider och kanske nått sitt [sin] utopi--utanför litteraturen--i operan, vill bli en symfonisk simultanblandning av all sinnes- känslor och tanke-

njutning. Den liknar med andra ord i förvillande grad livet sådant varje människa önskar sig att det vore, livet frigjort från vardagens grå och enahanda, livet i hela sin förbjudna rikedom av känslor, drifter, möjligheter, drömmar, livet i frihet, fyllt av allt det som konvensansen och den steriliserade mänsklighet som går under namnet moral, stat, religion stängt inne, förvisat till natten och tystnaden. Just i denna fantastiska utopi: universalkonsten, hägrar målet för konstens utveckling: dess identifikation med livet.²⁰⁴

116. Konst är någonting helt och odelbart. Jag tror t. ex. att det finns så många likgiltiga kompositörer därför att de har en utvecklade smak i fråga om måleri och litteratur. De är för specialiserade, de är fackidioter. Hur ofta syns det inte på deras val av romanstexter (att inte tala om behandlingen) och vad skall man säga om detta Scheusal till "allkonstverk", den romantiska operan. Detsamma gäller målare som ofta har en barnslig om inte hatfylld inställning till "litteratur", till vad de menar med litteratur. Detsamma gäller diktare som är så omusikaliska att de t. ex. överflyttar sonettformen till språk för vilkas naturliga melodik den inte alls passar. Eller som i rimklunkandet ser något allena saliggörande. Det kan aldrig någonsin bli fråga om ett allkonstverk. Men det är i högsta grad fråga om verk av allsidigt kännande konstnärer mottagna av en allsidigt bildad publik. Men låt oss för guds skull från början slippa ett ord som "allkonstnär". Att vara en allsidigt kännande konstnär betyder inte att man skall kunna komponera, kunna måla för att kunna skriva. Däremot skall man kunna allsidigt uttrycka sig inom sitt begränsade medium.²⁰⁵

118. För det första har han funnit sig föranlåten att normalisera Swedenborgs "barbariska ortografi och interpunktion". Den må nu vara barbarisk eller primitiv men i mitt tycke är det att beröva originalet en del av dess tidstypiska charm, och utan all jämförelse för övrigt är det ett förfarande av samma slag som när Vatikankonservatorerna, utan att fatta den antika hud-

behandling som vissa marmorskulpturer en gång måste ha haft, tog och polerade upp sina gubbar och förmodligen nötte av dem några väsentliga millimeter.²⁰⁶

120. Redan i början av fyrtiotalet publicerade Gunnar Ekelöf fragment av En Mølna-elegi. Men först nu föreligger diktverket, om inte fullbordat så åtminstone överlämnat åt läsarna. . . . Därmed berövar det sig också något av det legendens skimmer som kommit att omge det. . . . Men jag betvivlar att denna dikt rymmer den stora upplevelse som förväntats.²¹¹

"En Mølna-elegi" verkar som en stor dikt till uppläggning och syfte, men brister i fullföljandet. Den griper efter magi, men förlorar sig i lösligheter, en lättvindighet som förskingrar i stället för förlöser. Symboliken tittar fram gäckande och försvinner igen. Sin försteningsprocess, sin känsla av levande död orkar Ekelöf inte lyfta upp till sammanhängande syn. Det blir något brustet, en poesi i ruiner. . . .²¹²

125. De svårigheter Ekelöf hade att fullborda En Mølna-Elegi kan mycket väl tänkas bero på den form den stora dikten hade planlagts i, och vilken nu upplevdes som oegentlig eller passerad. Den rikt orkestrerade och mångbottnade kompositionen fick träda tillbaka för en det oslipades och enbart antyddas diktning. . . .

Det splittrade och kaotiska intryck Mølna-Elegin ger framstår ur denna synpunkt som oundvikligt. Under de decennier dikten växte fram kom Ekelöf att revidera sin konstsyn. I den publicerade dikten bryter sig de två kompositionsmetoder mot varandra, med vilka diktaren brottades under den utdragna tillväxtprocessen. Elegin blir på detta sätt ett ovanligt talande vittnesbörd om förändringar i konstuppfattningen.²¹⁹

Part II

130. (Motto: from one of Ekelöf's "influence" commentaries, 3 pgs., undated and written in pen, capsule 'K,' 'Kommentarer.')

Hela påverkningsforskningen bör omprövas, benägenheten för denna kausalitetsmanii skruvas ner.

De litterära påverkningarnas relativt mindre betydelse jämfört med annat i impulsväg som livet har att bjuda.

132. Men jag tror att det är i den riktningen man måste söka nyckeln till den form av poesi det här är fråga om. Som uttrycksmedel för upplevelsen begagnar den inte bara ett personligt, av påverkningar och egna formsträvanden bestämt språk, den vill begagna poesin som helhet, som kanon. Detta representerar i sin tur ett upplivande av förromantiska ideal eller snarare av förromantisk praxis. Det var romantiken som à tout prix ville vara sig själv. Tidigare öste man mycket mer ur gemensamma källor.²³³

137. men om du ser att solen lyser känner du omedelbart glädje och njutning. Det är nog sant men om du tänker dig en nyskapad människa så gammal att hon är vid sina sinnens fulla bruk men fullständigt utan erfarenheter. Hon skulle säkert inte känna någon glädje över att solen lyste första gången hon såg det [.] Varför? Därför att det inte finns något sinnesintryck som ger dig en känsla om du inte förut har någon erfarenhet av det. Om du ser ett ting som inte liknar något annat, som inte påminner dig om något du förut sett, varken till form, färg lukt eller smak, vad skulle du känna för känslor när du såg det. Ingenting om inte möjligen en känsla av förvåning därför att du ingenting kände, därför att din emotionella erfarenhet inte sade dig: "Här har du det och det tinget, det är

vackert, det är fult det är farligt["] etc. etc. Men om det där tinget stack dig eller brände dig skulle du säkert aldrig se det igen utan en känsla av förskräckelse.²³⁸

138. För professorer ter det sig väl snarare så: deras associerande är receptivt, inte produktivt (som författarna tror att deras är varvid många har fel och några har rätt.) De (professorerna och de som skall bli det) sitter och läser och säger sig: ah fan! det där känner jag igen från den eller den franska-engelska-tyska före-bilden, eller: Ah fan! dem där har läst om oidipuskomplexet eller Yin och Yang. Om de gick ut i livet i stället skulle påverkningsproblemet inte ställa sig märkvärdigare än att min styvfar Andersson gjorde det svårt för mig eller att min moder Petersson och hennes älskare Lundström kom mig att slitas mellan principer.²⁴²
142. Det är en total och beklaglig missuppfattning att endast litteratur, eller huvudsakligen litteratur, kan påverka litteratur. Man kan säga att det är en obegärad missuppfattning. S. k. formsträng-
het kan en poet om någonstans lära sig i musiken och varför inte i arkitekturen, åtminstone vissa slag av arkitektur. Vad han kan lära av måleriet är fullkomligt oberäkneligt, för måleriet är självt en skola i hur man uppfattar, ser livet och företeelser omkring sig.²⁴⁸
146. Eliot: påståendet har upprepats ideligen, oftast väl övertaget från andra kritiker, som om man genom denna upprepning velat undvika att lämna positiva bevis. När alltså senare kritiker velat lämna stöd för och uppge källan för påståendet har de bara kunnat hänvisa till det och det tidigare goda namnet. Ett rykte om ett spöke kan också fortleva genom hänvisning till trovärdig person.²⁵³
147. I "Färjesång" har Ekelöfs diktning fått en analyserande, ofta abstrakt, intellektualistisk hållning. För stilen i dessa tanke-dikter har han utan tvivel fått en impuls från Eliots senare poesi,

som han under åren efter 1940 också översatt; påpekandet gjordes redan av Erik Lindegren i hans initierade och skickligt deducerade Ekelöfessay i Tiden.²⁵⁴

Färjesång präglas helt av kampen hos den "som vill en mening"; den är till stor del problembrottnings, radikal självuppgörelse, på en gång sakligare och abstraktare än hans föregående; man kommer ovillkorligen att tänka på den senare Eliot. Men problemen är helt Ekelöfs egna. . . .²⁵⁵

Om man vid läsningen av t. ex. mig "kommer att tänka på" t. ex. Eliots diktning och hans dolda eller öppna citat, så är det genast en "påverkning". I själva verket är det läsarens association. För hade han sett efter grundligt, gjort sig möda att ta reda på innehåll och innebörd, då hade han inte gärna kunnat komma att tänka på Eliot--annat än på kontraste, som en antipod.

Så går det i slöhetens tecken. Det som infinner sig som en association hos läsaren pådyvlas ofta författaren som en påverkning, medan det i själva verket förhåller sig så att läsaren tackar ja till de jämförelser som arten och graden av hans beläsenhet inbjuder honom till. Att härav dra någon som helst slutsats beträffande överensstämmelserna i hans och min beläsenhet är minst sagt lättsinnigt.²⁵⁶

149. Din sista dikt i BIM var utomordentligt fin. Hemska men intressant och som alltid komponerad med stor smak. Jag kom att tänka på Baudelaire--den skald som jag sedan länge har tyckt att du är mest besläktad med--och erinrade mig hans speciella estetiska finess: att förprosliga poesin. Eliot har haft samma idé, nämligen att den finaste poesin, den riktiga poesin, ska ha ett inslag av prosa, vilket väl inte betyder annat än att den ska sakna fraser. Redan Tegner--för att tala i recensionsstil--rekommenderade ju att i poesin lägga in ett stycke "granit".²⁵⁷

Det är därmed nästan givet att Ekelöfs nuvarande mästare måste vara Eliot, den senare Eliot från och med "Ash-Wednesday". Något i det psykologiska läget hos de båda skalderna förefaller likartat: den självgenomskådande resignationen, den kvalfulla trosbristen, det envisa sanningstrevandet som med utstuderad lyrisk teknik förvandlar bikt till dikt. Även tekniken, versen, och själva uttryckssättet hos Ekelöf påminner ofta om Eliot: det sententiöst tillspetsade, det paradoxalt antitetiska, de halvt rituella omtagningarna och suggestiva upprepningarna, något präglade av automatism och samtidigt förrädiskt nyanserade. (Inte ens det grekiska citatet fattas.) Men det är ändå inte i första hand fråga om beroende, utan om en befrielse: Eliot har hjälpt honom med befrielsen, och det är en befrielse från syften och gestaltningar som Ekelöf inte känt helt som sina egna. Resultatet har blivit en strängt destillerad, intellektuell lyrik som med sin saltsmak och sin kristallkonsistens kommer mycken annan dikt att te sig formell och konventionell.²⁵⁹

150. Då och då under 30-talet läste jag väl Eliot, det jag hade, vilket slutade före Ash-Wednesday. Jag läste det då i nostalgiska stämningar, dels med tanke på den gamla värld som då gick under, dels, som sagt, av sympati för England under Blitzen.²⁶¹
152. Dikten vill nu vara klar, torr, sanningssökande, intellektuellt analyserande; vill visa det falska och grova i våra vanliga verklighetsomdömen. Det förefaller vara T. S. Eliots analyslyrik och intighetskänsla som erövrar Ekelöf, samtidigt som även yngre lyriker börjar odla samma stil; men Ekelöf säger sig ha läst Eliot först i efterhand.²⁶³
155. Ekelöfs översättningsarbete har säkerligen utgjort ett av de starkaste indicierna i påverkningsfrågan. Tolkningen av "East Coker" publicerades i BLM bara några månader, innan "Färjesång" utkom, och det har utan tvivel bidragit till att skapa förutfattade åsikter. Exempel på att översättningsarbetet verkligen

tillskrivits en viss betydelse i sammanhanget möter man hos Bengt Holmqvist i hans Ekelöfesså i Nya Argus 1947. Även Fehrman tycks ha samma uppfattning, när han i "Färjesångs" abstrakta, intellektuella stil spårar ett inflytande "från Eliots senare poesi, som han (Ekelöf) under åren efter 1940 också översatt..." Kan man visa, att de väsentligaste dikterna i "Färjesång" tillkommit, innan Ekelöf påbörjade sitt arbete med "East Coker", har saken kommit i ett delvis nytt läge.²⁷⁰

156. Jag läste under åren 38-40-41 en del Eliot, mer av sympati för hans tillbakablickande läggning och för England under Blitzten än av egentlig själsfrändskap, för hans teologiserande konservatism är mig alldeles främmande. Jag läste dock ingen av Kvartetterna förrän jag fick beställningen att översätta East Coker som flugits hit i några ex. över spärren med de legendariska hemliga mosquito-planen (hette de så, byggda av trä och fanér). Espmarks framställning av den s.k. påverkningshistorien i BLM okt. 59 (har Ni den, den är viktig) är i stort sett riktig. Av Eliot var mig då tillgängligt endast dikterna i den första, mindre "samlade" upplagan som går fram till år? Inga essäer.²⁷²

159. Jag skall gärna, mycket gärna äta mig översättning i den mån dikten är översättlig. Eftersom jag inte sett den är det ju i viss mån grisen i säcken och jag har endast vanliga lexika. Men betr. eventuella variorum readings kan jag ju kanske konferera med dig i korr. . . .

Min diktsamling nalkas nu äntligen efter ett fruktansvärt jobb sin fullbordning och visar sig sönderfalla i två: dels några och trettio dikter, dels en längre Waste-Land-dikt som handlar om tiden, identiteten och jakten efter det förflutna. Den tänkte jag eventuellt försöka få utgiven separat, då den spatiöst satt kunde bli ett litet häfte, bara en plaquette alltså. . . .

Jag väntar med spänning på Eliot!²⁸⁰

Jag sänder diktsamlingen i övermorgon, skall endast göra en kopia först. Det blev en massa arbete, men nu är det gjort. Så många nya perspektiv öppnade sig under arbetets gång. Materialet visade sig sönderfalla i två delar, dels några och trettio dikter, dels en längre Waste-Land-dikt, som möjligen skulle kunna utges separat då den spaciöst satt skulle fylla ett litet häfte. Den senare är ännu inte alldeles klar. . . . 281

160. Jag måste emellertid förutskicka att denna dikt, liksom de två andra medsända fragmenten, ingår i en ny diktsamling, som jag arbetade på samtidigt med Färjesång och som är mer en halvfärdig, så att jag tror mig om att kunna ha den klar till våren. Den kommer att bestå av en mycket lång dikt (omkr. 30 à 40 kvarto), "En Molna-Elegi", i vilken jag, som Eliot i "The Waste Land" efter förra världskriget, bl. a. söker dra ett streck under de gångna årens levnadsstämning och summera ihop. Dessutom innehåller den mycket annat av mera personlig art, fördelat på ett antal samhörande avsnitt, läsbara som dikter vart och ett för sig. Utom elegin skulle samlingen innehålla--och avslutas med--ett antal "Preludier", inledningar till något nytt, av vilka "Samothrake" är en. Det blir till en del krigs- eller snarare stridsdikter. 282

Det är egentligen med Kaj jag brukat göra min diktsamlingsavslut men jag visste inte om han kanske även denna sommar låg ute i skärgården och tog mig därför friheten att skriva till Er i ämnet på samma gång jag skrev angående "Horisont"

Med mina andra diktsamlingar har jag tidigare fått göra på samma sätt att jag lämnat upp en liten del av dem vid en preliminär överenskommelse. Denna diktsamlings titel skulle förslagsvis vara "En Molna-Elegi och 13 Preludier".

161.

Grupp I:

I-IV, (De drunknade), (Totentanz), (Idealisterna), Polyfem, (Ormbunkarna), Oden 1-2, (Vem som helst), Krymplingar, Iuri, (Chopinpreludiet), (Snöflingor).

Grupp II (Övergång) a) Grässtråt, Hekate (ev. ↓), Mändikt,

(Lektyr?) b) En saga, (Perspektiv), (Rimbaud), Gandhāramed, Vitt Örn, Stormen, Daphnis I-III, (Bal des lits bls.), (Lorrain), Amor o. Psyke, Sung

Grupp III: Melancholia, Vitt natt, (Nämlöst), Ej mskr (?), I huvud-
|staden (?),
 Frid (?), Jord (?), De ofödda, Mblnaelegi (Han på^o terrassen)

I I, II, III, IV, Snöflingor, Polyfem, De drunknade, De stupade, Iuri, Krymplingar, Idealisterna, Oden, Vem som helst

Men ej till mskr?²⁸³

163.

1929-30 i Paris hörde jag talas om Eliot men hade inte läst honom. Då och 1931 i Stockholm koncipierades det mesta av vad som skulle bli Sent på Jorden 1932, även SpJ 1962. 1931 lärde jag genom Clarté känna Mesterton, som då (bl. a.) befann sig i en period av Eliot studier. Han visade mig åtskilligt som väckte min förvåning mest genom det värde han satte på det (ex. Eyes that first I saw in tears). Han yttrade sin höga entusiasm över ex. Prufrock och uppehöll sig mycket och lärt vid detaljer t. ex. a pair of ragged claws etc. Det föreföll mig vara ett underligt sätt att läsa poesi med mikroskop. I de diskussioner mellan honom och Karin Boye betr. detaljer i The Waste Land vid vilka jag råkade vara närvarande (det var många fler) kan jag sanningsenligt säga att jag var en förströdd åhörare. Jag hade ju heller inte i bilden att göra.²⁸⁴

Nystar man upp de trådändar som finns torde man hamna hos Osterling som om min allra första bok skrev att jag hamnat bra långt inne i "det öde landet" eller liknande. Han å sin sida har för-

modat påverkan eftersom "Det öde landet" några månader innan kommit i översättning på Spektrum, i vilken tidskrift han visste mig engagerad etc. Jag såg översättningen först vid ombrytningen i vilken jag medverkade som lay-out-man. Hur skulle på dessa få månader någonting kunna färga av sig på Sent på Jorden. Jo, jag kände ju Mesterton och Karin Boye och dikten förelåg ju sen länge på engelska. De tog inte det oskrivna bladet mig så synnerligen mycket till råds i sitt arbete. Jag var inte särdeles intresserad av Eliot och jag fann deras diskuterande fram och åter av minsta uttrycksdetalj en smula preciöst. Och för övrigt! Återigen samma fråga: Vad finns av E i Sent på jorden. Nulla! Inte ens en typografisk prick.²⁸⁵

164. Eliot lärde jag känna först genom Mesterton, tidigast 1930 eller 1931, och helt franskoriterad som jag då var sade han mig inte mycket. Jag fick ingen kontakt. . . . 1932 på varen läste jag med intresse för detaljerna, knappast ännu för helheten, den Boye-Mestertonska översättningen av The Waste Land. Sent på jorden var då färdig. . . .²⁸⁶

165. Företaget var till det yttre ganska respektabelt och om de utgivna alstren kunde egentligen bara sägas att man delade eller inte delade de meningar som framfördes i dem, men det fick sin skumma prägel genom initiativtagarna, två judar av tvivelaktig affärs-moral. . . .

Sådan var han och sådan var den miljö där han--liksom av sysslöshet--tillbringade det mesta av sin tid. Jag var med många gånger då det resonades Ryssland, libido, Corbusier etc. Det var revolutionära resonemang såtillvida som de utgick från att den mest fullständiga traditionslöshet var idealtillståndet och att en sådan traditionslöshet var en tänkbar framtida verklighet. Mot alla stämningar eller föreställningar som inte kunde upplösas i rent intellektuella beståndsdelar uppträdde man hänfullt avfärdande. Alla livsytringar uppfattades som funktioner, alla personliga karakteristika uttyddes och förlänades en obscen, löjlig eller

lumpen innebörd. Ingen har väl blivit så missbrukad som "fader Freud".²⁸⁹

166. Men jag kan inte säga att jag någonsin kom djupare in i hans värld förrän jag själv började översätta. Det har ofta skett under trassliga och besvärliga förhållanden och jag är inte alltid nöjd med resultatet: sålunda tillkom den 1942 utgivna "Valda dikter" (i samarbetet med Ronald Bottrall) under pressen av en oerhörd tidsnöd inför Eliot's snart väntade ankomst till Sverige pr "flygande matta", och de översättningar med vilka jag bidragit måste nog (med undantag för "East Coker") betraktas som hastverk.²⁹⁰

167. Knut har hört två föredrag av Eliot och jag hörde bara det sista, det om Shakespeare. Så hörde vi honom läsa dikter och det var något som man aldrig hört förr. Det var melodiskt och rytmiskt som musik. Burnt Norton läste han med övertygande kraft, som en missa solemnis. . . . Han måste höra sina dikter liksom en musiker hör sina tonskapelser.²⁹¹

I dessa sympatiserande stämningar satte jag i början av Promenader, som innehåller återblickande, självbiografiska skisser, ett citat ur Prufrock. Jag kallade också ett kåseri för "Vad åskan sade". Men vad flickorna sjöng som jag då mötte cyklande var en osedlig visa med ordet knulla som rimord. Jag uppfattade i blinken melodin och detta ord. Och detta är en polemik mot en Eliot som ställts och ställt sig själv på piedestal, inte något lån. Det samma gäller prosastycket Gerontion i Utflykter. Där gäller polemiken den svenska orkeslösa instängdheten under kriget, med referens till den eliotiska impotensen, så som den när det gäller vitala funktioner kommit till uttryck i nästan alla hans dikter.²⁹²

168. Hjuln snurrar och snurrar,
därarna står och hurrar
vid alla stationer,

allt medan tåget går vidare
utan att föra till blidare zoner,
utan att gå någon vart . . .

169. Prufrock finns där i sin egendomliga, pensionerade anonymitet, och han formulerar vad som delvis måste ha varit Eliots egen situation: han har hört sjöjungfrur sjunga till varandra, men tänker sig inte att de skall anropa honom. Faktum kvarstår att han hört dem, och redan det är ett slags anrop, inte nödvändigtvis till en erotiskt passiv, men till en erotiskt modlös.²⁹⁵

"I grow old, I grow old / I shall wear the bottom of my trousers rolled", sådan défaitism kan jag aldrig göra till min. Jag är sangviniker och motståndsmän även nu (mot det s. k. välfärdssamhället). Jag jag tror [sic], jag vet t. o. m. att havsjungfrurna sjungit just för mig.²⁹⁷

171. Han [Trimalchio] tillhör vår tid. Och så gör även de andra, framför allt de tre personer som fått själva handlingen i Satyricon om hand: Encolpius, Ascyltos och Giton, ty deras, särskilt Encolpii, öde tycks vara Priapos' förbannelse, den erotiska oregelmässighet och hemlöshet som var ett av efterkrigstidens karaktäristiska och som spökat i de flesta av 20- och 30-talens bästa och allvarligaste romaner, noveller och dikter.³⁰⁴

175. Cumae var grekernas äldsta koloni i Italien (?) och moderstad till själva Neapel. Den Cumanska sibyllan spelade länge samma roll för den västliga latinska världen som oraklet i Delfi för den östliga. Hos folket fortlevde denna skräckblandade vördnad ännu sedan oraklet under den första kejsartiden tystnat, ja, ännu långt in under kristen tid, eftersom Sibyllan, liksom även Virgilius, antogs ha profeterat om Kristus och om yttersta domen och därför blev halvt kanoniserade fast hon hörde hedendomen till. Den medeltida psalmen Dies irae . . . vittnar om detta.

Och av de fem Sibyllor som Michelangelo målade i Sixtinska kapellet är det bara en som har en djupt personligt upplevd fysionomi, den cumanska. De andra är ganska ordinära modeller. Men i den cumanska sibyllan har M. porträtterat en romersk ättmoder av folket, en gammal sträv och bitisk megära som härskar över en hel bakgård full av barn och barnbarn i kraft av sin dominerande röst och svada allestädes närvarande i ekot mellan de lutande och ruckliga bakgårdsväggarna. Vergilius skildrar henne just som rytande och stormande i sin yra och det är väl efter den skildringen han gått men även efter en dominerande folktyp. Man har begåvat henne med en bok-- det är de s. k. sibyllinska böckerna, en senare kristen förfälskning. Enl. V. ristade hon sina ord på löv och lät dem fara och det var sedan den frågandes sak att sammanfoga dessa ord till en mening. ³¹⁶

177. (Mölna brygga. Bortom vattnet Södra Bergen utanför Fäflång
Till höger Djurgårdens lövmassor ovanför dem skymtar ett o annat torn
man hör stadens klockringning
Johan Dureen sitter på soffan under träden en bit inåt
land. Han är väl påpälsad hatt, scarf flera gånger om halsen, ulster,
händerna i fickorna, pampuscher. Han ser solen sjunka).

La durée Dureen

Nuflöde Löf Undell Nedlöf

Nend

Känslofilosofierande Edun Duen

Nude

179. Identitetsproblemet redan på bryggan är viktigt för allt det följande. Vem är det som sitter där? Jag och icke jag, eller jag och icke längre jag? Vem är narren? Den brokiga hösten omkring med de olikfärgade löven. Vad är hösten och höstlöven? Minnesfragment, meningsfulla eller bara "sådant som faller en in", vilket vid Gud är lika meningsfullt. Vad gör detta spöke av ett ego som sitter där? Du säger att han skriver. I helvete, hur vore det möjligt. Han är ett passivt upplevande medium som låter "det" ske, alldeles som luften låter löven fladdra genom sig. ³²³

181. Jag hittade i Shakespeares "The Tempest" följande (mycket berömda, i antologier ofta citerade) visa, sjungen av Ariel, för din sjuttonhundratalsserie. Om du toge fram din gamla surrealism och förmålde den med dina naturalistiskt-romantiska lärospån till ett underhavslandskap med vattenlontainer! och gubben försvinnande i omgivningen!³²⁷
184. Det finns parallellismer. 2 personer på helt olika platser kan göra samma erfarenhet och dra likadana slutsatser, t. ex. uppfinna samma ångmaskin, för olikare varandra är inte vi människor än att detta är möjligt. Allt vad vi gör är ett slags förlängning av våra sinnen och av dem beror, till en god del, "själen", våra öden och äventyr and our achievements. Inte ens tiden spelar avgörande roll, jag menar så att likartade uppfinningar helst uppstår i en av ömse parter delad livssituation.³³⁵
185. Litteraturen är på visst sätt en och odelbar. Det finns nämligen i våra dagar (liksom i tidigare skeden) vad jag skulle vilja kalla en dikters främlingslegion. Utföra. Medlemmarna känner ofta inte varandra, det är kanske tusen mil mellan dem och de har aldrig hört varandras namn eller läst en rad av varann. Men människan är inte mer avvikande från typen, och människans villkor, moraliska, sociala och konstnärliga, är inte mer olika än att flera samtidigt levande kan ha kommit till liknande, ja, nästan identiska eller rentav identiska formuleringar. Vårt känsloliv ger i vissa allmänmänskliga situationer samma utslag och vårt tankeliv presterar samma lösning. Detta är konstens parallellföreteelsen.³³⁷

187. (Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 257)

Nej, låt mig kastas i havet
 utan kanonkula, utan fana
 sakta förintas förenas
 Nej, först bränns till aska
 att kastas i havet
 Då är jag drunknad också i luften

Röken har fört mig ut över landen
 Det lättaste av mig vilar i stratosfären
 Det medeltunga skall ligga som gödsel
 i var mans trädgård^o
 medan det tyngsta skall sjunka till botten
 och smälta samman till medelpunkten
 och det subtila skall flyga som sporer
 att tända nytt liv. Enfin c'en est fait,
 La Brinvilliers est en l'air
 de sorte que nous la respirons!

Tack vare sin nyplatoniska ^oåskådning behöfver Swedenborg ^osålunda fortfarande ej draga någon distinkt gräns mellan andligt och materiellt. Kroppen blir för honom endast omhöljet för anden, stoffet, som endast i tanken kan skiljas från formen. Det är i kraft af denna grundtanke, som Swēdenborg i sitt teologiska system i viss mån kan spiritualisera allt kroppsligt och förkroppsliga allt andligt.³⁴¹

188. Ty själen är kroppens mest subtila substans; det är därför vi med säkerhet veta, att den är odödlig, ty den kan ej förstöras af de grövre elementen. Den kan ej förrättna, gå^o under genom eld eller luft eller på något annat sätt. Då kroppen dör, frigör den sig från dess väfnader och samlar sig, äfven om några spridda delar däraf gå förlorade.³⁴²
189. På oss senfödda^o hvilat tyngden af alla de föregående generationernas affall från det gudomliga, ej såsom någon ofrånkomlig arfsynd, som predestinerar oss till helvetet, men såsom en nedärfd belastning af onda böjelser. Det är detta, som symboliseras däraf att de aflidnas andar påverka alla våra tankar och känslor. Gud själf sörjer för att jämvikten mellan änglarna och de onda andarna alltid upprätthålles i vårt inre, så att det blir vår egen vilja, som faller utslaget. Vårt syndafall blir därför lika själföfvalladt som den första människans.³⁴⁵

190. Vad jag önskar framhålla är endast, att man icke får lägga alltför stor vikt på det yttre upptagandet av idéer från olika håll. . . . Man måste skilja mellan den själs- eller livsart, varur en dikt framgätt, och de yttre påstötter, som föranlett diktandet, eller de färdigt påträffade tankeformer, i vilka diktarens erfarenhet tömmer sig. . . .³⁴⁸

Makrokosm-mikrokosm. Mitt närmaste korrelat är Swedenborg som ju betraktar Gud som "den stora människan" i vilken vi är partiklar. Men det vore lika oriktigt att säga att jag lånat tanken som att den originellt uppträtt hos mig. Den har bara förefallit omedelbart acceptabel där jag träffat på den. Här som i annat tillhör jag traditionen.³⁴⁹

191. Dock!
Förlåt en enkel man
som har varit i det krig
i många
krigen mot sig själv
. . .
Affairerna vid Valkiala
Austerlitz
där jag stupade under en
armenisk general
stod upp igen
vid Leipzig
orthodox
m.m. mina stupade släktingar
lever i mig.

193. Genom den andliga avkopplingen befordras bildskådandet, och det kan inte förvåna oss, om i bildskådandets spår den paradox framträder som är utmärkande för "déjà-vu-fenomenet": å ena sidan vetskapen att det vi står inför icke av oss tidigare erfarits,

å andra sidan det igenkännande leendet inom oss, ja, viskningen:
det har du sett förr!³⁵³

Diktaren. Mig tyckes att jag upplevat detta förr ...

Dottern. Mig även.

Diktaren. Kanske jag drömt det?

Dottern. Eller diktat det, kanske?

Diktaren. Eller diktat det.

Dottern. Då vet du vad dikt är.

Diktaren. Då vet jag vad dröm är.

Dottern. Mig tycks att vi stått någon annanstans och sagt dessa
ord förr.

Diktaren. Då kan du snart räkna ut vad verklighet är!

Dottern. Eller dröm!

Diktaren. Eller dikt!³⁵⁵

194. Jag kommer från det fjärran landet. Där hade jag far och mor.
Det förefaller mig så längesen. . . .

Det måste ha varit första gången jag kom till jorden. Allting
föreföll mig så ytterligt främmande, vägarna ledde alltid fjärran,
mina ögon kunde inte fästa sig vid någonting. Jag glömde allt för
dessa nya, det förflutna för det kommande. Först nu, i minnet, är
mig det förflutna som ett hem.

Jag minns dunkelt andra världar, jag vet att det är andra världar
jag minns. Men det är sällan och så oklart. . . .³⁵⁶

195. Vi kunde också säga: det är samma identifikation, som ligger under
de förvandlingar, som i sagorna plötsligt kan träffa både levande
och döda ting och som vi återfinner hos romantikerna, där de låter
sina blomster- och djurhamnar falla över människorna eller tvärtom
låta mänskliga varelser lösgöra sig ur bundenheten i helt andra
existensformer.³⁵⁷

196. Tron på ett organiskt försteg
ett mysterium mellan hud och döds-kalle
en skapelsens springande punkt--
vad den har gjort oss inskränkta!

Liv har många metoder
från stjärnhimlens jämsning
till tjärnens
och till den mänskliga brygdens

Vad skall jag tro
annat än att stenen också lever
så som den har förändrats
om också dess dag är lång

Låt oss inte underkänna livet
Låt oss inte underskatta det
genom att göra det till ett privilegium
enbart för oss.³⁶⁰

197. H. C. [Andersen] speglade sig själv i tingen. . . .

Vart ting har symbolvärde, eller snarare: vart ting är också en
en symbol, även vid behov de enklaste.

H. C. Andersen var en ypperlig skrotskulptör. Han kunde få de
enkla tingen att leva och tala och han behövde inte ens svetsa
eller löda. Stoppnålen hade vissa vyer genom sitt enda öga. Vad
hon mest fruktade och vad som gjorde henne mest irriterad, vad hon
rent av hotade omvärlden med som en halvhysteriska, det var att
hon skulle gå av. Hon hade ingen riktig säkerhet, för pigans
fingrar och inför de grova tyger, kanske rentav läderskoningar,
hon brukade stickas i. Hon visste med sig att hon var av dåligt
stål, billig, allmän. Andä ämnad en krävande, alltför krävande
uppgift. Allt detta säger oss hos Andersen denna artefakt, och de
andra döda tingen eller "osjäliga" smädjuren säger oss mycket de
också. . . .

Saken är den att Andersens konst står på en djup magisk grund.
Han är magiker som barnet eller vilden. Han trollar in liv i det

enkla föremålet, utan hjälpmedel. Han behöver inte leda in elaktricitet [sic]. Vem har sagt att konsten skall vara rörlig. Det är konstnären som skall trolle in potentiell rörlighet. Den som byggde Parthenon var också en magiker.³⁶²

198. Det räcker inte med teorien att livet existerat av evighet, men vi måste förutsätta att allt är liv och att det inte finns någon "död" materia. Därmed faller hela den besvärliga frågan om livets uppkomst bort. Jag tror alltså inte på en sådan skillnad mellan organisk och oorganisk kemi att den ena av dem skulle äga något som den andra saknar. Eller vara en produkt av något en länk i en kedja som den andra helt och hållet står utanför. Men jag tror inte heller att man skall kunna framställa liv i laboratorierna, detta av rent tekniska skäl. Vi finna det helt naturligt att det oorganiska livet varit evigt men kunna inte tänka oss att det organiska skulle vara det. . . .³⁶³

199. Titel: Ting och saker
trouvailles
där ting är obearb natur

saker mskligt

Ting är natur
fynd på stranden
formade av vind och
vatten

Saker är mänskliga
bär spår av den ordnande
eller nötande handen

Där satt hon, La Femme-Tronc, på en skranglig piedestal med svarvad fot, nästan liknande en hattställning hos en modist, fast solidare. Hon log mot publiken och det var något verkligt glatt och tilldragande i leendet. Det märkvärdiga och fångslande med henne

tycktes faktiskt inte ligga i att hon var vanskapt utan i att hon trots allt var så völskapt. Hon var platinablond och det lilla nättans ansiktet hade blå, spelande ögon och en mycket röd mun, Kroppen var klädd i blå trika, djupt urringad kring halsen. Bristen på armbågnings- och fortkomstledamöter tycktes helt och hållet försonad genom en fulländad formernas rundning, skuldrorna var fasta och välformade, den övriga kroppen framträdde under det tätt åtsittande trikaerna med samma fördel, endast höftpartiet hade genom det ständiga sittandet blivit väl kraftigt utvecklat. Det kom henne att likna ett paron där hon satt, ett vackert franskt paron, lika självklart och naturligt armlöst och benlöst som någon sin ett paron kan vara. Hon var ett slags levande föremål, ja, just ett föremål--som man kan sätta-ställa-lägga på en byrå, på ett bord eller var man vill ha det. Ett levande föremål.³⁶⁴

200. / Tragiskt meningsfullt nonsense / Carroll / evighetens kartong
de mänskliga schackpjäsernas samtal i underjordens

byråläda--Schackpjäserna--

201. Projekt. Bok av grotesker: Sagan om Dürers Melancholia. Flugan för en dag. Alltifrån melankoliskt underliga prosadikter till rena Falstaffiader. Barock utbyggnad av Andersens sagoteknik, personifiering av omöjliga ting, sagoton. Det hela ligger i tonen: det melankoliskt undrande betraktandet av vad som helst och möjligheten till en mänsklig handling i det. Mänsklig--o--mänsklig. Komedin i tragedin i allt. Arbeta efter principen Saga om första bästa ting som faller en in, (en filt, en kortlek) sätta sig in i filtens-kortlekens situation om den vore människa och mskan ödet.³⁶⁶

202. (Rukeyser / Sjöberg, p. 239)

Så läser jag upp lås och drar från reglar.

Så stiger jag förgäves ut ur speglar

in i speglar,

ser själv i ändlös spegelföljd

hur oföränderligt och långt
jag sneglar--

204. Un peu a [dans] la manière de M. Eliot

Även tiden har sina trädgårdar
en entuslägenhet på Söder [malm]
dusch, bokvrå, lite lycka
och lite lycka
och preventiv och småningom [kanske]
när inget annat hjälper hysteri³⁷⁰

205. Ångest och preventiv Those brown pills
Ångest och kolokvint

Den föreställer bland annat en spinnhusflicka, ännu inte helt för-
därvad, på 1700-talet och nu, med duenna eller gammal faster och
tillbehör. Utropet "Ah ça! ma chère" härstammar från en mindre,
impressionistisk scen av Bellman, förlagd till ett av Clas på Hör-
nets smårum, i vilket några adliga odågor tar en lantlig oskuld "på
ett bord".

206. Eliot var årsbarn med Katherine Mansfield, och eftersom jag just
läst henne kommer jag att tänka på vilken egenartad och tidstypisk
förmåga båda har, Eliot ännu starkare, att ge oss mystiken i en
existens, hur alldaglig som helst, genom att måla tingen omkring,
tiden på dagen, luften och ljuset i rummet, genom att göra människan
till en osynlig närvaro. . . .

Eliots storverk är för mig den hemlighetsfullt levande bild han
givit av tjugutalet, viktorianismens dödskamp, efterkrigstidens
ångest, moralnöd och upplösning, det epokgörande samhällsskredet.
Detta var en verklig initialupplevelse, och vår egen tidsångest,
den må vara hur motiverad som helst, måste ses som en följdföre-
teelse till det som inspirerade den. Man har gjort sitt bästa att

förstöra detta stora diktpanorama--jag talar inte enbart om "Det öde landet", utan lika mycket om de många dikterna före och efter-- genom att dissekera det och söka lokalisera alla dolda citat och hänsyftningar, av vilka en del mycket väl kan vara omedvetna, åtminstone i ingivelseögonblicket. Man skall läsa det som en levnadsstämning, en livsfris. Det är alltid pusslet som är originellt. .

. . . 372

207. Summan av mitt légitime défense blir som förut att mina dikter inte innehåller, inte uttrycker detsamma som hans dikter uttrycker och innehåller, och det har avseende såväl på arten av tidsupplevelse som arten av konstnärlig hållning och målsättning, har giltighet mänskligt, religiöst eller om man så vill mystice, samt i fråga om historiesyn och moralisk färg. . . . 373

208. Det finns all anledning att räkna med ett inflytande från Thoreau vad gäller Ekelöfs höga uppskattning av det vilda och våldsamma i naturen och människan, ett inflytande som blir än troligare med tanke på det likartade i de två författarnas uppfattning av negativa faktorer i samhällsutvecklingen och sättet att undanröja dem. 378

209. Det är det fina och skygga, det självständiga, det vilda--inte det rovgirigt vilda utan just det vilda element som kan göra en människa till sin egen unika människa och ingen annans, detta vilda som Thoreau ansåg förklara och förtydliga vad vi vill och menar då vi helt obestämt talar om "det goda". 379

Det finns identifikationer, du déjà vu, "mig tyckes att jag upplevt detta förr" (Drömspelet) eller Platons idéer eller Pythagoras själavandringsfantasier, som inte är "lån" därför att det rör sig om ungefär likvärdiga (diktare, konstnärer, musiker, vanl. människor, djur etc.). . . . 380

210.

Jag har fått mig tillsända lic-uppsatser som i slutet haft långa förteckningar över läst litteratur. Detta och åter detta har jag läst för att komma underfund med E.

Inte en tredjedel i dessa listor har varit mig bekant och inte en fjärdedel har jag ens någorlunda läst. En del har naturligtvis varit standardverk i vilka vederbörande sökt underrätelse om den tradition jag anses tillhöra: mystikernas, underavdelning de konfessionslösa och intellektuella.³⁸¹

Min tidiga bedömning i uppsatsen Ekelöf och Eliot, En studie kring "Färjesång" . . . torde kräva viss revidering; jag skulle i dag vara mer benägen att se vissa med kinesisk och indisk mystik samverkande impulser från Eliottexter som Ash-Wednesday och Burnt Norton. Invändningar mot att tillskriva East Coker avgörande betydelse kvarstår dock.³⁸²

211.

Hade Ramnefalk forskat på egen hand i saken, hade hon kunnat bevisa att Espmark hamnat i fel fil. Det finns nämligen ett långt brev från Gunnar Ekelöf till Karl Vennberg från 1938 där Ekelöf på begäran av Vennberg värderar en Eliotöversättning denne gjort. Ekelöf har inte för tillfället sina Eliotböcker tillgängliga, förklarar han, men--visar det sig--det spelar inte så stor roll. Han kan långa stycken utantill. Brevet finns förtecknat bland otryckta källor i Vennbergslitteraturen.³⁸³

Sådant och andra förflugna citat och läsfrukter drar ibland förbi mig. Sällan eller aldrig minns jag en dikt eller en mening helt. Det är kanske för att jag inte kunnat skriva under så många dikter helt. Vanligtvis är det bara några lösryckta ord som jag kommer ihåg och som i sin lösryckthet tycks mig ha en mystisk tonfärg, klang och mening. Ett slags tung och meningslös mening; gallret, gallret, gallret. Orden som föregår radernas slutfall har jag rekonstruerat i minnet som ett slags tidsfördriv, jag kunde inte minnas dem självfallet, och de tycks mig också mera likgiltiga. Det är själva klangen i detta slutfall, inte ordet i och för sig, som är meningsfull och som ger den mänskliga situationen. . . .³⁸⁴

213. Jag undrar också om du skulle ha lust att åtaga dig att översätta Eliots sista dikt, Little Giddings, som jag fått av författaren. Jag väntar med att skicka den tills jag får höra om du anser att du kan åtaga dig det. Eliot själv skulle bli mycket glad om du gjorde det, det har han skrivit.³⁸⁸
214. Även jag fick Little Gidding från Eliot, drog igenom den och tyckte att den knappast var i samma klass som East Coker och de andra. Mitt intryck var emellertid flyktigt. Jag skall försöka tränga längre in i den och ge dig svar efter Påsk, då väl också lite manus torde vara att vänta. Den är nog i alla fall lättare att tolka än The Dry Salvages som var i det närmaste omöjlig.³⁸⁹
215. Samma dag som E. anlände för jag med nattåget till Lappland igen och hann inte träffa honom [annat än 5 minuter: Ingrid Ekelöf]. Till samma dag lyckades förlaget också pressa fram det första exemplaret av boken för att lämna honom i hand vid ett inledande cocktailparty hos Bottrall, resten måste jag av överansträngning m. m. fara ifrån.³⁹¹
- Emellertid var jag inne på middag med Eliot, som jag "hade till bordet", d.v.s. det var en herrmiddag och han hade värdinnan till bordet och jag honom, en stillsam, anspråkslös och förtjusande man som pratade Princeton, Oppenheimers, sina gamla systrar, engelsk landsbygd etc. med Ulla Bonnier ungefär som om världen vore så liten (och stor) som den just precis är, samt om "Practical Cats" med mig.³⁹³
218. Men jag skulle tro att Eliot även annars, i en sannolikt inte oriktig känsla av olösligheten i det problem Västerlandet sedan hundra-femtio år bemödat sig att lösa på dem ofta illusoriska frihetens och frivillighetens väg, helt enkelt vägrar förhandla på basis av de förutsättningar liberalismen gjort till norm, därför att han anser dem vara postulat i diskussionen, inte förutsättningar för

den. Då ställer han sig hellre under trons auktoritet. Han tror nämligen inte på framåtskridandet. Och jag undrar om det inte skulle vara nyttigt för lite var av oss att syna vår egen så kallade radikalism i sömmarna. . . . Under sådana förhållanden är jag beredd att betrakta även Eliots kyrksamhet som en smak-sak, ett fenomen snarare än någonting mänskligt graverande. . . .

Ser man Eliot som en lite mindre modernistisk poet och en lite mera radikal konservativ bortfaller ju ändå något av den besvärande dubbelheten i vår syn på man och verk. En viss migränartad surhet går över.³⁹⁶

219. När jag vid närmare skärskådande feck veta att det gällde Jesus uppenbarande sig vid Emmaus för lärjungarna (ett trol. falskt passus till stöd för uppståndelsen i köttet), strök jag det. Den embente, enögde eller blinde krymplingen som går omkring i Dublin, utstötande med jämna mellanrum: "For God, king & country" är mig oändligt mkt mer sympatisk än: "I'm a royalist, an anglo-catholic & a conservative" Hur mycken falskhet! Man frågar sig det.

Därmed är inte sagt att jag inte tekniskt påverkats eller under-visat mig själv via Eliot. Men hela hans typ, från Stt Louis via Boston till London är mig djupt frånstötande, liksom trol. jag har varit honom d:o. Jag i positiv flådermårskula, han negativ.

Jag skall överleva denna kuf och hans kufsällskap av prelater o. dal. professorer.³⁹⁷

220. Kanske hade T. S. Eliot flera sidor än vad som syntes, men två av hans naturer var påtagliga: poeten och lagkarlen. Med "lagkarlen" menar jag då: den som dömer efter vissa spelregler, den som känt behovet att ställa upp en kodex för att kunna lägga ett raster av rätta linjer över världens och livets kroklinjer och irrgångar. Jag tror inte det var av lagiskhet han ville ha det så, jag tror snarare det var av skygghet, vekhet, en skräck inför livet, som kunde te sig som livsfientlighet.⁴⁰⁰

(Nathan / Larson, p. 59)

Ni krymplingar som krällar efter mantelfällen:
 "En smula, en smula, o herre, av din kraft",
 så tigger ni, och får ni inte stjäla ni,
 tar när han vänder ryggen åt er, krymplingar!

222. Av de två anser jag mig vara den originellare. [I marginalen: Vem originellast får andra avgöra]. Medan Eliot gick till bönboken skapade jag genom personlig tydning av en uråldrig, kr. o. förkristen myt en okonfessionell "religiös" livshållning. Det är med förbehåll jag här använder ordet religiös därför att det för tanken till kyrka, samfund, lära och jag är mot detta. Men utan tvekan är min dikt--religiös, och kanske är den också förkunnelse--men till frihet.

Men medan E₁ utgår från en tillbakablickande kulturpessimism [konventionalitet i livsattityden: Ekelöf] som kan närma sig defaitism, aldrig har övergivit en utpräglad konservatism och slutligen "tagit till bönboken" dvs. vänt sig till en kristendom som huvudsakligen är teologiskt färgad och intresserad, har E₂ börjat med en reduktion av alla värden för att komma åt språkets, och tanke-känslans poetiska konstanter och med dem bygga upp en i flera avseenden personligt lyrisk värld. Han har visserligen experimenterat mycket och framför allt--om av nödtvång (tvånget att skriva för pengar) eller likgiltighet för sin värdighet . . .-- inte dragit sig för att publicera mycket efemärt eller halvgånget som borde fått förbli i skrivbordslådan. Han har genomgått kriser, nästan att förlika vid förnedringsperioder, under vilka han visat dragning förfallit till en sentimental nordisk romanticism eller en art av brusten och självlömkande profetism. Men han har också med utgångspunkt i en vision av livets villkor och med en post-kristen och förkristen myt som vehikel skapat en egen konfessionslös mystik och i liknelser eller tankedikter sökt uttrycka det sinnligas förhållande till vad vi kallar det översinnliga. Och om han också därvid sökt stöd och jämförelsepunkter i tidigare orientalisk och förkristen eller halvkristen mystik har han funnit personliga uttryck för sin syn på livet, ett mål för livet, och på tankeumgänget med döden.⁴⁰²

224. I jämförelse med vad som kan läggas sådana kandidater till last tycker jag att Ezra Pounds skuld väger lätt. En politisk idiot, en skrodör och hyperindividualist, och jag vågar föreslå hans namn till nästa år. Han har varit en impulsgivare, även i 'idealisk' mening, och kommer säkert för följande generationer att gälla mer än de två andra.
227. Beroendet av E ett slags legend. Om Rimbaud hade levat och fått Nobelpriset hade jag varit framför allt beroende av honom. Nu är jag det faktiskt i en del dikter från Dedikation till [Sorgen och stjärnan--sedan stopp och annorledes].--Av E har jag aldrig varit influerad. Vem tänker på att anse mig beroende (influerad) av Södergran? Ingen, därför att Södergran är ingen, så gott som, på den marknaden.⁴¹³
228. Den oerhörda inskränktheten hos litteraturhistoriker o.a. som stirrar sig blinda på tidens berömdheter och inte vågar förutsätta möjligheten av, eller ens läsa sig innantill till, måttet av originalitet hos individer av mindre språklig spridning resp. berömdhet eller bekanthet. Deras metod är bokstavligen, efter berömdhetsmått beräknat, att slå ihjäl flugor med hammare. Men det kan råka vara en ovanlig fluga. Vad hammaren beträffar kan den vara omedveten om att den används till detta ändamål. Om en sådan hammare kunde tänka, dvs. förstod vad det var fråga om, förstod språket t.ex., kanske den slog en bysnickare av den berömda typen på tummen. Och den fula flugan flög.⁴¹⁴
- Vad jag avskyr de stora språkens eller de stora maktsfärernas isolationism! En hyggligt uppfostrad svensk, dansk etc., holländaren eller grek kan hjälpligt 3 à 5 språk. En anglosaxare eller fransman uppföds i tron att hans kultursfär och språk är så gott som det enda och rådbråkar resten.⁴¹⁵

229. O vilka stora andar ha inte
 svävat här över detta
 platta Tyskland (Ekelund)
 Ja, och vilka folkligt förnämmande andar
 över detta okända Sverige
 att inte tala om Finland fjärran under
 stjärnorna
 Det talas, som om det finnes monopol,
 om enbart Shakespeare, Racine
 Goethe
 Giv åt Stål en penning
 Vilka har inte bemödat sig om mänsk/ligheten
 i Portugal, på Salernohalvön
 i Furstendömet Nichts zu machen
 eller i Grefskapet halfpenny worse
 Jag kan, efter dryg erfarenhet, inte
 annat än säga
 Till dessa landsflyktiga hör jag
 Till landsflykten bekänner jag mig . . . 416

230. Att "dikt skall (skulle) göras av alla, inte av en" (Breton) är
 en löjlighet. Men att "kultur", hur den är, görs av alla i all-
 sidig påverkan är oförnekligt. Det tror jag är en sats som inte
 ens geniet Leonardo skulle ha förnekat.
 Kulturen, litterär, musikalisk, målerisk eller vad du vill, tek-
 nisk, görs inte av "genier" men av alla i interferens. Jag kan
 finna ett styrkande ord hos en mig likgiltig. Jag kan finna en
 chockerande långtråkighet eller bortkommenhet hos någon till vilken
 jag är frände. 419