# REdiscovering Ekelöf

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Gunnar Ekelöf. *Skrifter* and *Register*. Ed. and comm. by Reidar Ekner. vols 4–8. Pp., Vol. 4:356; Vol. 5:526; Vol. 6:391; Vol. 7:494; Vol. 8:506; Register:113. Stockholm: Bonniers, 1991–93.

GUNNAR EKELÖF'S *SKRIFTER* REPRESENTS a remarkable achievement by the editor Reidar Ekner and an important event in Swedish literary history. Through Reidar Ekner's personal and professional devotion to Ekelöf and his *oeuvre*, we have been given this unique opportunity to renew our experience of the well-known poetry, prose and translations published by Ekelöf in his lifetime. But because Ekner has also given us in these volumes a substantial body of rich and often exciting new or revived material, I use his initials to title this essay "REdiscovering Ekelöf."

My review of the first three volumes of this eight volume series appeared in *Scandinavian Studies* 65:1 (1993), so the following discussion focuses on the remaining volumes in the series (4–8 and the *Register*). However, because of some specific issues raised by the edition as a whole, and by Ekner himself in the *Register*, I occasionally refer to the earlier volumes and to questions raised in the first review.

Interspersed in this general discussion are examples to illustrate why the edition marks a major turning point not only in Ekelöf scholarship, but in our view and understanding of Ekelöf as one of Sweden's most important and difficult poets. In brief, the beautifully produced volumes present all of Ekelöf's familiar oeuvre, and they also allow the reader to discover poems and prose pieces that were either never seen before or disappeared after their first publication. In the process of assembling and selecting this material—by extracting poems and collections of notes



from a jumble of notebooks—Reidar Ekner has indelibly and inevitably inscribed himself into the Ekelöf canon. Ekner confronts this sometimes awkward yet inescapable fact in the last volume. My review, therefore, attempts, first, to comment on the edition as a whole, and, second, to discuss briefly the relation of the editor to the edition itself and to the autobiographical collection of notes and comments reproduced in volume 8.

As a quick reminder, let me note that in order to edit these volumes, Reidar Ekner organized nearly 10,000 pages of handwritten material left by Ekelöf (*Skrifter* 1:10—all future references will simply give the volume and the page). The notebooks and papers are often undated, and from different years, so that the same notebook may have drafts from various periods of Ekelöf's life. By gathering most of Ekelöf's writing into one collection—Ekner points out that Ekelöf's letters and some longer translations remain uncollected (*Register*: 9–10)—Ekner gives the reader the opportunity to follow Ekelöf's entire literary career. The first three volumes take us from the first surrealist-tinged poetry, which had such a major effect on Modern Scandinavian literature, through the poetry of the Second World War and into the concluding *Diwan* trilogy. Volume 4, *Appendix 1927–1968*, contains poetry that was either never published or published only once. Thus, the first four volumes (not the first three as I naively thought in my previous review) constitute The Complete Poetry of Gunnar Ekelöf (*Register* 111).

Before discussing volumes 4–8, it may be useful to comment in more detail on the identification of sources that Ekner provides. By using the system he devised for his 1970 *Bibliography*, Ekner allows for both continuity and ease of reading and research. His notes give complete references to the publication date of each poem or prose piece, or, if it has not been published, to the box or manuscript capsule, usually located in the Uppsala library, that contains it and to the specific notebook in which the text is written. For instance, in the notes under 1944, we find the poem "Skaldämbetet" (4:317) [The Poetry Profession] listed. Beside this title we read "E4301 (E8601)." This first figure tells us at a glance that the poem was published in 1943, and that it is the first poem listed in Ekner's 1970 bibliography. The "(E8601)" means that the poem was republished in 1986 and that in Ekner's next bibliography, it will appear as item 1.

Another example selected randomly from the same volume is the poem "Jord, jag har beundrat" (4:323) [Earth, I have admired] followed

by "XXIVa: 6:173." This combination of Roman and Arabic numerals indicates that the poem may be found in manuscript capsule XXIVa, notebook 6, page 173. At first this system may be confusing, and the casual reader may feel lost, although Ekner explains it in his notes. (The explanation for this code appears once in volume 1:257–8; it might have been useful to provide references to the code in the following volumes.) This critical apparatus, however, makes everything in the entire edition accessible to informal or in-depth scholarly research.

Now for the volumes themselves. In addition to the intellectual and aesthetic delights offered by Ekelöf's own writing, the edition has condensed and informative literary and biographical notes at the back of each volume. In these notes, the editor often provides a brief historical or family context related to specific years to help the reader keep a chronological sense of Ekelöf's development. For instance, in volume 4, printed along with the references to previous publications, one finds that in 1967 Ekelöf took a three week trip with his wife Ingrid to Athens, Crete, and Tunisia (4:330). After the couple returned, the pangs of cancer made themselves "alltmer påmind" (all the more felt), yet Ekelöf supervised the publication of *Vägvisare till underjorden* (1968, *Guide to the Underworld*, [1980]). Unless one already knows well Carl Olov Sommar's *Gunnar Ekelöf: En biografi* (1989), Ekner's brief and selective comments increase the reader's sense of involvement in the poems. The power of the poems, however, obviously extend well beyond their biographical context.

By transcribing, ordering, and editing the poems in *Skrifter* 4, the editor has given us, through the prism of his own vision, a powerful new body of Ekelöf poetry. For instance, in a section called "Grotesker," with poems and drawings ranging from 1926 through the 1960s, one finds a series of poems written in the mid–60s that have to do with Hell. The poems play comically and affectionately, yet with deadly seriousness on the theme of Ekelöf in Hell. One poem is called "Gives en sittplats i helvetet? Fröken?" (Is there a seat in hell? Miss?). Another may be of more interest to American readers; it has an echo of Edith Södergran, whom Ekelöf so warmly admired, yet its combination of irony and personal truth belongs uniquely to Ekelöf.

*Kan du se Marilyn Monroe*
*hennes hud, hennes bröst, hennes mage*
*hennes hår, hennes ben, hennes öde*

*Varför frågor jag detta som aldrig har känt henne?*
*Därför att jag tror att vi är i Helvetet*
*Kanske kan jag träffa henne där*
*ensam flygende runt rymden som en Francesca*
*evigt förföljd av Paolo*
*Till denna krets hör jag*
*Jag tror inte på skärselden*
*och att sjunga i himlen skulle bli mig förfärligt*
(*Skrifter* 4:286)

(Can you see Marilyn Monroe
her skin, her breast, her stomach
her hair, her legs, her fate

Why do I who never knew her ask this?
Because I believe we are in Hell
Perhaps I can meet her there
flying alone around in space like a Francesca
eternally pursued by Paolo
To this circle I belong
I don't believe in purgatory
and to sing in heaven would appall me)

This surprising little poem reaches out to the public image of Marilyn Monroe, with her famous pulchritude, and connects it directly to her tragic fate. By invoking Dante to suggest her isolation and her persecution, the narrator, on one hand, identifies with her through his own pain. On the other hand, he concludes by undermining or rejecting the very image of purgatory and, implicitly, heaven which he has invoked. The last lines, then, leave both the narrator and Monroe circling forever in some linguistic limbo.

There is a great range of such poetry in this volume, and readers will undoubtedly choose for themselves what they like. If volume 4 is the remaining poetry, volume 5 is composed of Ekelöf's translations, from his important *Hundra år modern fransk dikt* (1934, One Hundred Years of Modern French Poetry) to translations made in the 60s. The impact of volume 5 lies both in the authors that Ekelöf chose to translate and in his productivity and linguistic ability. In the works published here, he translates extensively from French, from Latin, and from German—the Nelly Sachs translations from 1966—and English, including his well-known translation of Eliot's "J. Alfred Prufrocks kärleksång" ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"). While these translations provide insight into which authors Ekelöf considered important, they also reveal the depth of

Ekelöf's involvement with European literature and with specific authors, such as Rimbaud.

Although I knew of Ekelöf's admiration for Rimbaud, this volume surprised me with its extensive Rimbaud translations and with the perceptive commentaries written by Ekelöf about Rimbaud's poetry. Perhaps one example of how these literary sources may have related to Ekelöf's own writing may be found in Rimbaud's use of Hell as a theme. Ekelöf singles it out as early as 1939, even as he comments on Rimbaud as an "impotent," a man whose victory was Pyrrhic, yet who demanded a "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (5:76). Ekelöf distances himself from Rimbaud in the closing lines of this essay, yet notes that Rimbaud "lärt mig vikten av at sätta mina ideal så 'lågt' som möjligt" (5:77) [taught me the importance of setting my ideals as "low" as possible]. In this sense, hell may be as low as he could get. Since the combination of hell and pain is an affinity that Ekelöf also found in Edith Södergran, one begins to uncover through this edition continuities that run like underground rivers throughout Ekelöf's writing. The translations provide an unusual source for our discovery of some of these underlying connections.

French authors in general constitute the majority of Ekelöf's translations. This dominance may well have been related to potential publication, but it reflects the profound involvement that Ekelöf had with French literature throughout much of his life. One final note on volume 5: given Ekelöf's remarkable range of languages, I am almost happy to say that his Chinese translations were based on a French anthology (5:509).

In this context, we must recall his lifelong interest in Middle Eastern languages and literatures. In volume 6, in the wonderful "En outsiders väg" (An outsider's way), he writes of the passion for India that sent him to Paris and the School for Oriental Studies (6:170). We learn from volume 7's "Tradition eller traditionsbrott" (7:340–3) [Tradition or breaking tradition] that he was taught Greek in school. Presumably both of these sources relate to his fascination with the Byzantine culture and led up to the magnificent *Diwan* trilogy, now expanded by Ekner in volume 3 to seven books. (And to think that many major American universities have dropped or diluted to nothingness their one foreign language requirement!)

The final three volumes, 6, 7, and 8, are devoted to Ekelöf's prose. Ekner describes volume 6 as where "hans övervägande litterära prosa samlats, den som står den fiktiva berättande skönlitteraturen närmast" (6:9) [his predominantly literary prose is collected, that which stands nearest to narrative fiction]. In the next,

> *ingår hans essäistik med dragning åt det kritiska, och i den tredje och avslutande prosavolymen, dvs.* Skrifter *8, har hans dagbokstankar, kommentarer till det egna författarskapet samt de självbiografiska anteckningarna sammanförts.* (6:9)
>
> (go the essays that tend toward the critical, and in the third and final prose volume, that is to say *Skrifter* 8, thoughts from his diaries, commentaries on his own authorship, and the autobiographical notes have been assembled.)



For readers familiar with some or all of these essays, there is a great joy in returning to them. Volume 6 contains *Promenader* (1941, Promenades), *Utflykter* (1947, Excursions), and *Ur Verklighetsflykt* (1958, from Flight from Reality), all familiar from the 1963 Delfin paperback, and containing essays that may well be considered modern classics. As I was deeply influenced by these essays many years ago, they ring a particular bell with me, if I may play off the opening story "Klockor över staden" (Bells over the city) with its portrait of Stockholm. To readers who love Stockholm, some of these stories will bring to life a Stockholm of the 30s and 40s. One also rediscovers in them Ekelöf's absurdist and almost Swiftian humor. In "Tre demokratiska förslag" (Three Democratic Suggestions) he makes a proposal to improve the use of the misunderstood atomic bomb (6:190–2).

Ekner has added to these warm, amusing and sometimes intimate essays a group of stories not previously anthologized under the rubric "Ungdomsnoveller" (Stories from [his] youth). Even these often youthful pieces have charm and import. For instance, one obviously autobiographical piece, "Versailles tur och retur" (Round Trip Ticket to Versailles) was published in *Utflykter*, but in a shorter version narrated from a first person point of view. In the unpublished and longer variant, the narrator, Martin Dellin—probably a reference to Hjalmar Söderberg's Martin Birck, as Ekner points out (6:10)—describes the sense of confusion, oppression and terror throughout Europe on the eve of Hitler's invasion of Poland. The two Versailles stories typify the way in which these prose volumes allow the reader to experience not only fictional representations of Ekelöf's life, but an epoch and a cultural history that seem to be fading all too rapidly from national and international consciousness.

Volume 7 contains *Blandade kort* (1957, Shuffled Cards) and *Lägga patience* (1969, Play Solitaire) as well as a new volume assembled by Ekner titled *Tredjegiven* (A Third Deal [Ekner provides the translations for these three books in his *Register* 112]). These books are composed of newspaper articles and essays written by Ekelöf over a span of thirty years. Although the essays range widely, Ekelöf, and later Ekner, tried to assemble them thematically. They reflect Ekelöf's involvement in the art, music, literature, and politics of the world around him. Some of the essays go well beyond the limits of the genre which they represent, "Självsyn" (Self Observation, 7:111–23) for instance. And Stockholm appears again in "Hjalmar Söderbergs Stockholm" (7:221–5). This essay begins with the premise that Söderberg is the third of the great Swedish writers to depict Stockholm. Before him came Bellman and Strindberg; one is tempted to add that Ekelöf follows comfortably in the tracks of his famous predecessors. In other essays, such as "Nils Ferlin" (7:237–41) and "Evert Taube" (7:242–4), Ekelöf's close acquaintance with other famous Swedish authors of his age allows him to depict them insightfully. Throughout this volume Ekelöf's own personal voice strikes the reader with its perspicacity and individuality.

*Skrifter* 8 unfolds Ekelöf's artistic and intellectual development through a variety of genres. There are many short fragments of essays and at times almost epigrammatic pieces. They range from a few lines or one or two paragraphs to a few pages. Dag Hammarskjöld's *Vägmärken*, though I read it many years ago and it is obviously quite different as a text, comes to mind. One must read this volume piecemeal, absorb it section by section, depending on the mood and curiosity of the moment. There are also invaluable notes here on the final trilogy, as well as the opportunity to ponder Ekelöf's private meditations. This collection constitutes for Ekner an autobiography, and, if the comparison does not seem too remote or contrary, in the sense that Hammarskjöld's *Vägmärken* is an autobiography, so too is this. Since both men were deeply mystical—although that mysticism took radically different forms for each—and both felt themselves "called" as it were to their professions, I think the comparison may be legitimate. In the case of either work, the text must be read slowly, carefully, with the reader absorbing what s/he can of one selection, then continuing on, almost reluctantly, to the next section. In spite of this piecemeal process, the volume has a clear internal structure.

Ekner takes care to explain the structure that he employs in this volume, and he bases it on Ekelöf's writing. He argues that Ekelöf was



quite aware of the difference between his authorial identity and his personal life, yet these two were intimately bound together. According to Ekner,

> *Detta du, eller jag, som så ofta förekommer i hans dikter, är intimt förbundet med hans biografiska jag. Men det är inte identiskt: det är ett litterärt jag, den sammanhållande rösten i såväl hans poesi som hans prosa—det representativa jaget.* (8:7)
>
> (That you, or I, which so often appears in his poems, is intimately bound together with his biographical I. But they are not identical: it is a literary I, the unifying voice in his poetry as well as his prose—the representative I.)

Ekner continues by explaining that Ekelöf uses his own biography and personal experiences in stories from *Promenader* and *Utflykter*, but, argues Ekner, these stories would not in fact produce an autobiography, since the events and the narration are shaped by aesthetic requirements. He continues:

> *Däremot gör Ekelöf tidigt anteckningar om en självbiografi som han ämnar skriva. Eftersom han också sent i livet gör liknande anteckningar, faktiskt ocksa börjar skriva en form av självbiografi, kan det alltså inte vara några redan under 1940-talet publicerade självbiografiska prosastycken som han syfter på i de sena anteckningnar till den planerade självbiografin.*
>
> *Vad han haft, och fortsätter att ha i tankarna, framkomma om man först särskiljer prosa som* skulle *ha kunnat ingå i en annorlunda tänkt självbiografi: 1) reflexionsprosa och 2) de många egenkommentarerna.* (8:7–8)
>
> (On the other hand, Ekelöf has early notes about an autobiography he intends to write. Since late in life he also writes similar notes, actually begins to write a kind of autobiography, it cannot be to those prose pieces published as early as the 1940s to which he refers in the late notes for a planned autobiography.
>
> What he had, and continues to have in his thoughts, appears if one first separates prose which *should* have been able to go into a quite differently conceived autobiography: 1) prose of self meditation and 2) the many personal commentaries.)

What Ekner does, then, in *Skrifter* 8 is assemble a composite of an autobiography based on notes and comments in diaries written by Ekelöf throughout his life. Ekner divides the book into three parts: 1) Ekelöf's "Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Political" essays and notes from 1926 to 1968, 2) his "Commentaries" on his own literary production from

approximately the 1940s to the end of his career, and 3) the concluding "Autobiographical" section. In this section, in shorter or longer notes, Ekelöf reflects, directly or indirectly and more or less consciously, on various parts of his life. Volume 8 is, then, a kind of do-it-yourself autobiography where the pieces may be assembled in different ways; one can refer back to early poems and prose pieces, or forward to comparable sections in the Commentaries or the Autobiography.

There is no direct narrative here, and one cannot really sit down and read it like a book. For that, one might more easily sit down with Ingrid Ekelöf's *En Självbiografi* (1971). (Since Ekelöf often dictated poems and ideas to her, Ingrid Ekelöf's central role in the last years of Ekelöf's life is apparent throughout this edition. Ekner makes it clear that without her much of the later material would not exist [3:275–6].) This volume is Reidar Ekner's attempt to gather the remaining pieces of Ekelöf's notes and diaries into a single volume. Each section might have a different appeal to different readers.

The Commentaries are at times particularly fascinating. For example, the question of Eliot's influence, which has been so widely discussed, resulted in pages of unpublished comments that reflect Ekelöf's irritation with the claims of Eliot's influence and with the academics who are so obsessed with them (8:198–213). As an example of how these volumes interplay with each other, in volume 7, Ekner publishes a somewhat caustic Eliot article, "Sagt om Eliot" (7:329–31, Said about Eliot) which gives us a quite different vision of Eliot and Ekelöf. (Ironically and perhaps amusingly at this point, Ekner notes that Eric Thygesen has established the possibility of some Eliot influence [8:459].) In another section, additional notes to *En Mölna-Elegi* (8:213–28) reveal a bit more of the background of this famous poem which has been so fully analyzed and explicated by the books of Leif Sjöberg and Eric Thygesen.

Some commentaries and/or speeches in this book surprise the reader. In "La brutta cosa" (8:244–5), Ekelöf makes an angry appeal for his right to earn, for the first time in his life, more than just a subsistence income. His frustration and near despair with the level of taxes is surprising and touching. On another emotional level, his acceptance speech, read by someone else for the 1966 Nordiska Rådets pris (Nordic Council's Prize, 8:253–4), which he received for *Dīwān över Fursten av Emgión* (1965, *Dīvān over the Prince of Emgión* [1971]), may have darkened the mood of the audience. In the talk, Ekelöf refers to H.C. Andersen's portraits of the tragic and the egotistical in humanity. He suggests that if Andersen chose



in his best tales the clown image, then he could choose the image of the tortured Prince of Emgión. That short talk mentions his interest in Byzantium. Ekner's next selection (8:254–55), dictated by Ekelöf to his wife Ingrid, continues this theme. It explains why he came to be interested in the Byzantine. This one page comment reminds us that Ekelöf and Yeats may be connected, however contrarily, through their personal Byzantiums, their unique forms of mysticism, and their at times painful awareness of the interconnectedness of beauty, art, and life.

The reader who goes by fits and starts through volume 8 experiences many such moments. One can gain, for instance, a new and deeper understanding of the *Dīwān* poetry. Yet it must be said that any reader interested in Ekelöf will want to go back and spend hours and hours, if not days and weeks, with volume 3 of this edition. Volume 3 is an extraordinary collection in which three new sections have been added to the four volumes (this includes Ingrid Ekelöf's *Partitur*) that crowned Ekelöf's life. The commentaries from volume 8 add to the delights of volume 3.

The Autobiographical section of volume 8, written, Ekner tells us, with Stendhal's autobiographical writings in mind (8:13), comes closest to a narrative. In these sometimes short and fragmented passages and essays, the reader can absorb a sense of Ekelöf's time and thought in the 1930s, either while he lived in Paris or as a young writer in Sweden. Throughout this volume, as indeed in the other volumes as well, one sees how deeply Ekelöf immersed himself in literature and language. As I mentioned above, he has a lifelong fascination with foreign languages and uses them constantly in his writing. At a deeper level, Ekelöf seems to have lived much of his life, like Rilke, in a kingdom where mystical angels—whose metaphorical lives derived from his own language and from his penetration into the outermost reaches of human consciousness—inspired him to write. The following passage could have been written as easily in 1966 as it was in 1933.

> *Mitt i natten väckte mig min kallelse så stark att jag vacklade fram till det omätliga vita papperet. Jag såg det osynliga öppna sig ända till det som är bortom det osynliga, jag hörde andarna tala med varandra över världen och såg vita själar sitta runt omkring mig.* ("En natt" 8:361)
>
> (In the middle of the night my calling woke me so strongly that I stumbled over to the boundless white paper. I saw the invisible open to that which was beyond the invisible. I heard the spirits talk with each other across the world and saw white souls sitting around me.)

This calling pursued him all his life, and as we read these volumes we comprehend both the struggle and the joy behind his writing. We understand better why he wrote volume after volume of such brilliant poetry, and yet we also know more about why, in this ongoing drive to write, he left so many unfinished papers behind. (Perhaps related to this, a heavy consumption of alcohol is depicted a number of times in these volumes.) However, even as we become absorbed in Ekelöf's thought and writing, we remember Ekner's presence in volume 8.

Perhaps more than in all the other volumes, except for volume 4, one must confront in volume 8 the invisible presence of Reidar Ekner. Ekner has compiled this "autobiography," and it will forever retain his stamp. Any editor who approached the Ekelöf archives in Uppsala, and the related material elsewhere, would have been forced to create his/her own version. The scattered fragments necessitated a hand to gather them. The inscription of the editor's vision upon the texts left by the author cannot be avoided. As the reader meanders through this compiled autobiography, s/he recognizes that both the presence and the shape of the material depend significantly upon the life breathed into it by the editor. One can even question the notion of "autobiography" here, for any text, be it novel, essay, or autobiography, so compiled would inescapably be shaped by the aesthetic vision of its editor. Based on his friendship with Ekelöf, and his profound awareness of Ekelöf's themes and intellectual preoccupations, Ekner has created this text which he accurately titles Ekelöf's "Tankesamling" (Collection of Thoughts, or Observations). Ekner himself brings up his editorial role in the edition's final volume, the *Register*.

The *Register* includes Ekner's closing comments about the entire edition as well as an invaluable index of names. It also contains a list of misprints in volumes 1–7. In this volume, Ekner responds briefly to criticisms that have been made during the time that the previous volumes were published, and he raises here some of the issues mentioned above. The reader should read this little book carefully, for it makes its argument in concise but effective terms. On one hand the editor explains why a variorum edition was neither economically nor personally feasible; on the other he admits that a good deal of material, such as drafts of poems and newspaper reviews, still remains to be assembled. Yet he feels that his edition can be the foundation to which later publications may be added (*Register* 9–10). Ekner also devotes some space to responding to criticism of his revisions of already published poems in the first three volumes.



The need for these revisions is a question I have in fact brooded over while reading these volumes. I commented in my first review on the risk that Ekner took in making the changes, yet they seemed to me valid. Since then I continued to ponder the problem, for it struck me as indeed a serious one. Then one night last month I attended a poetry reading by the American poet Galway Kinnell. In talking about his poetry, Kinnell mentioned that he continually revised his poems. At the end of his reading, a member of the audience asked him to read one of his early poems. The poet took out a recently published collection, but before he started to read, he pointed to a woman in the audience who lovingly held a copy of an early volume. Her version would be different from the one he would read, he announced, since he continuually revised his poetry. People might not like that, but he would keep on doing it, he added. Kinnell referred to Valéry's comment that no poem was ever finished. He realized that for Valéry that may have meant that the poet simply abandons the poem, but for him the statement was quite literal, and he would continue to work on his poems no matter when they had been written or where they had been published. Kinnell's comments were particularly vivid to me precisely because I had been wondering about Ekelöf and Ekner's edition. Suddenly, I saw Ekelöf lying in his bed making minor revisions to poems that thousands of readers treasured. And as complicated as it is, I understood why Ekner felt a deep personal obligation to find and publish Ekelöf's last version of each poem (*Register* 10). Ekelöf, like Kinnell, continually revised what he wrote, published or not. Kinnell's insistence on his right to do this has helped me to understand Ekner's decision better. I still see it as a risky undertaking, but few editors are as capable as Ekner, and I have come to terms fully with his decision. Perhaps one day, in some distant kingdom of poetry, we may sit down with Ekelöf and a variorum edition and argue about which word is best in one poem or another, but for now, Ekner has assembed a truly distinguished edition.

I should admit that I have a few quibbles of my own. Ekner goes to great lengths to keep the texts uncluttered and free from distracting footnotes and references. And, indeed, he and Bonniers have succeeded extremely well in producing a series of volumes in which Ekelöf's cornucopia of texts—the poems, the essays, the translations, as well as the sketches, fragments and marginalia—are easy to read and visually attractive. I find it difficult and foolish to argue with the physical pleasure one experiences in picking up these volumes and reading them. Yet, as an

academic, it would have been easier for me to move back and forth between volumes, or between sections of volumes, had the notes been correlated by page numbers rather than just by titles. Since Ekner chose not to have the footnotes numbered, or any trace of their existence present in the body of each volume, references to page numbers in the notes would have facilitated the reading of his commentaries. Similarly, I think a few more dates in the notes or the texts would have made it easier to follow Ekelöf's development in the prose volumes.

The complete edition, however, represents an extraordinary accomplishment, and one of great importance to lovers of Swedish poetry and prose. By devoting years of his life to this edition, Reidar Ekner has deepened and extended Ekelöf for us all. Like the handprint used by Ekelöf on the back of some his own works, any editor's hand would have been imprinted on this edition; that is an inescapable fact owing to the nature of the uncollected papers and diaries left by Ekelöf. Ekner's thoughtful and subtle editorial grip holds these volumes together with skill and love. The edition itself reveals Gunnar Ekelöf as a great poet, writer and translator, and as a witty, erudite, always probing human being who questioned the fundamental premises of existence.