

will agree that Strindberg's "point of departure was his own experience of reality" and that he rearranged his material for dramatic effect "by simplifying, conflating, and accentuating" [the terms in the original are *förenkla, dra ihop, sätta ut accenten*]. What Gunnar Brandell has to say about Strindberg's distortions of actual experiences invariably is persuasive, and what he points out as the resultant stage effectiveness of *To Damascus I* is pertinent. But, as everyone who has read the prefatory note to *A Dream Play* knows, Strindberg did classify *To Damascus* as a dream play. Hopefully, the day may come when someone will present extended definitions of *dream* and *dream experiences*, definitions of the sort that may very well have been and even probably were in Strindberg's mind when he spoke of dreamplays. Gunnar Brandell comes close to presenting the makings of such definitions after asserting "None of the notions about Strindberg's 'dreamplays' is relevant to the first part of *To Damascus*."

Many people will have good reasons for being grateful to Barry Jacobs and the Harvard University Press for making this excellent book available in English.

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Shideler, Ross. *Voices Under the Ground. Themes and Images in the Early Poetry of Gunnar Ekelöf*. With a Foreword by Reidar Ekner. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1973. Pp. XII + 151.

Ross Shideler's book consists of three long chapters. The first is a close reading of "Voices" as published in its final form in *Om Hösten* (1951). With references to two earlier versions and to the psychoanalytically oriented critics Charles Baudouin, Gaston Bachelard, and Norman O. Brown, Shideler attempts to identify the dream-like voices and space of the lengthy, enigmatic poem, which contains several of Ekelöf's central themes: alienation, death-in-life, meaninglessness, and the gap between word and reality. The second chapter shifts the focus to the autobiographical content of "Voices" and by juxtaposing it with three autobiographical essays, "A Photograph," "The Sunset," and "An Outsider's Way," Shideler convincingly links these themes to Ekelöf's relationship with his father. The third chapter confirms and widens his conclusions by applying them to four other major Ekelöf poems, "Open it, Write," "Euphoria," "The Gymnosophist," and "Absentia Animi." All the relevant texts, except the long essay "An Outsider's Way"—most of them translated by Shideler—are to be found in the Appendix.

The second chapter is the core of the book. In it Shideler traces the themes of death-in-life and meaninglessness, symbolized by the stone and the voices in "Voices," to Ekelöf's childhood experience with his father. Ekelöf's father, a banker, in the late stages of syphilis, was nursed at home for many years until his death in 1916, when Ekelöf was nine years old. Ekelöf writes in "An Outsider's Way"; "My own childhood environment was well-to-do but so far beyond the normal and so unrealistic that there was good room for peculiar kinds of want." The father,

meticulously groomed but with empty eyes and a terrible, meaningless face, sat in the large Stockholm apartment mumbling nonsensical words, while the little boy struggled with the letters in an ABC-book, trying to connect the letters NOSE, the picture of a dog's nose, and the nose of his own collie. Hence, Shideler calls the problematic relation between words and reality in Ekelöf's poetry the "dognose problem," stating: "The problem is specifically tied to the poet's ability to make a direct correlation between a word and an object, and, in essence, it challenges the traditional obvious meaning of words. This correlation between word, meaning, and reality, which in early years symbolizes the boy's alienation, becomes a means of overcoming life's meaninglessness by poetry."

Despite Shideler's less than lucid style, his second chapter is a convincing application of biographically oriented text analysis, and is, as Ekner affirms in the foreword, an important contribution to the understanding of Ekelöf's poetry. However, towards the end Shideler cautions that he is incapable of believing that "Voices" or much of Ekelöf's later poetry is "fully analyzed or is capable of being limited to a precise interpretation." His own reading of "Voices" is not fully satisfying because he both generally underrates the importance of what may be the central image of the poem, the bird, Archaeopteryx, and completely disregards its sexual implications. Ekner points this out in the foreword as his main disagreement, saying: "To me it seems obvious that the bird is of the female sex, that it represents a beloved woman who has reluctantly abandoned the narrator for someone else, for 'a new light,' to use the words of the poem." This interpretation was suggested by Gunnar Tideström in a radio talk of May, 1952, and may not have been available in print to Shideler. It is, however, disappointing that he does not mention Tideström's analysis of "Samothrake" in *Lyrisk Tidsspegel* (Lund, 1947) when discussing that poem.

A few minor strictures: There is a discrepancy in the wording of the book cover's "in the Poetry of" and the title page's "in the *Early Poetry* of." From Shideler's preface, where he says: "...this book may do more than a slight injustice to Ekelöf in that it does not always, not perhaps even to a major extent, concern itself with his 'best' writing, but rather with his earliest," it is clear that he intends his title to read "in the *Early Poetry* of." This is a serious mistake, since Ekelöf's early writing centers around the collection *Sent på jorden* of 1932, and Shideler concentrates on some of the greatest poems and essays from Ekelöf's middle period, when he issued *Färjesång* (1941), *Non Serviam* (1945), and *Om Hösten* (1951). Also: Rabbe Enckell is one of the main Finland-Swedish, not Swedish, poets. And Shideler states: "Only gradually has significant criticism about Ekelöf begun to appear, and all of it is in Swedish." However, Leif Sjöberg, whose work is referred to in the text, has published valuable articles since 1963 about Ekelöf in English.

Despite these reservations, Shideler's careful and stimulating delineation of the "dognose problem" is a major achievement, and the "dognose problem" may well become an accepted concept in future Ekelöf scholarship.

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