

## CHRONOMETRY

### Karl Vennberg

A critic and leading figure of the 1940's, modern Swedish literature's most vital and controversial decade, Karl Vennberg was educated at Lund and Stockholm universities. He has published eight volumes of poetry as well as translations of Kafka and Eliot.

Some people have got the idea  
that I, in pure defiance  
and out of youthful desire to rebel,  
would deny the usual chronometries

but I have the greatest respect for chronometries:  
Julian, Jewish, Gregorian, Mohammedan  
and never embark on any of my important enterprises  
without establishing their place in time  
their position in relation to the world's creation  
the founding of Rome  
the flight to Medina and so forth

Those who charge  
that I have blasphemously  
violated the chronological sense  
presumably suffer from personal ill-will  
Who could seriously wish to do away with  
these threadbare calendars  
with all their domesticated swindle  
who would dare meet  
without time's masks and concatenations  
all the silent stipulations of history  
in the dark's hollowed stairs

There really isn't much  
that in itself is worth loving  
and contrary traits  
can as a rule shake hands with each other  
Even truth  
can be bisexual  
and beget monstrous children with itself  
And how moreover can the hunter's truth  
be reconciled with the quarry's  
Conscience and sense of justice  
can dupe us with the simplest fits of ague

Altogether it seems as if  
the bones which  
the world's history throws us  
are right thin and gnawed on

But I haven't yet heard  
that it had succeeded in tossing  
truths, consciences, or meatbones  
outside of time

Even if I perhaps ordinarily need wool rags  
and warming wraps  
to keep life in my small weaknesses and articles of belief  
I must unmistakably deny  
that I have coldbloodedly set myself against  
anything so beneficent and all embracing  
as chronometry

### Gunnar Ekelof

Educated at Uppsala, and  
in London and Paris,  
Mr. Ekelöf has edited two  
"little magazines" and is  
credited with introducing  
modern forms of poetry into  
Sweden. His eight volumes  
of poetry include *Non  
Serviam* (1949), from  
which this poem is taken.

## BAL DES PETITS LITS BLANCS

A small boy stands  
before the aquarium's darkness  
Full fathoms five thy father—  
(But the Prince of Monaco departs

with a band of gunmen  
pistols in their belts  
and twisted moustaches  
to the little mermaids)

It is in hot August  
when the peppercorns redden  
on the trees in the Oceanographic  
Museum. He dreams: