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## Weird Realism and the Modernist Short Story: The Case of Tage Aurell\*

### Abstract

The issue of this paper is the place of *mimesis* and *realism* in the *modernist tradition* of the *short story*. Starting with conceptions of modernism in recent short story study, as exemplified by readings of especially Hemingway and Faulkner, the paper proceeds in a comparative discussion of some complications of the short story strategies of Tage Aurell in the Swedish 1920's and the heydays of modernism. As for an explanation of these complications, the discussion ends in a hypothetical proposal.

The short story—for long seen as lowbrow, popular, and commercial—was accepted into the hierarchy of literary genres only when, in the ending 19<sup>th</sup> century, it adopted Impressionist and Modernist techniques and abandoned realism, i.e. the reality effects of traditional prose-fiction. As a genre, this Modernist short story is even said to be closer to poetry and drama than to other kinds of prose-fiction, e.g. the novel. Nevertheless, realism has its own modernism, especially in the short story, as the Hemingway-example might show. Furthermore, some of these alleged modernist traits of short fiction are quite ancient, popular, and lowbrow in origin—as is seen in experimental regionalisms, e.g. in Faulkner.

Seen in this perspective, Tage Aurell is a somewhat provoking case: combining, as it seems, Hemingwayan techniques and Faulknerian thought forms, the result is a hard-boiled Biblical style drawing at a realism both modernist and *weird*. It is proposed that the special quiddity of these short stories derives from the meditative reading and writing practices of the popular religious revivalist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This culturally influential tradition—in part imported from the USA—many Swedish modernist writers of the 1920's were fostered into since childhood, and also re-using as authors, believers or not. Aurell had the same heritage, and a good hypothesis is that his unique handling of modernist traditions is due to this influence.

## Weird Realism and the Modernist Short Story: The Case of Tage Aurell

### Entry

This paper is an outspring of my previous efforts to get to grips with a puzzling corpus of texts, namely the short prose fictions of the author Tage Aurell in the Swedish 1940s. I call them *weird* because they don't fit well into established period concepts and epochal schemes. My attempts at analysing the historical character of these texts and their place in literary tradition, has prompted a reconsideration of the relations between modernism,<sup>1</sup> realism,<sup>2</sup> and the short story. Thus, Aurell's short fiction indeed raises fundamental questions concerning aesthetics as well as literary history.

### The short story

The theoretical enterprise of defining the short story is often tried, but always failed – and it *must* fail. This is because no theoretical definition could correspond to the historical changes of the genre, or, should we say: of the *texts*. Nevertheless, as soon as we confront the historical material the question of how to read is prompted, and so, willy or nilly, we are dragged into genre issues. Thus, genre reflection and heuristic stipulations are *necessary*, however provisory they may be.

I shall not drag you into the mess of short story definitions. Dines Johansens critical analyses of this field in his seminal dissertation of 1970 still hold. But I do want to mention Allan H. Pasco, who in the 1990's made some good contributions in the provisional field. For sure, he rejects theoretical definitions.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless he stipulates: “a short story is a short, literary, prose fiction.” This tautological formula turns out to be quite useful. Pasco comments the key words one by one;<sup>4</sup> but *shortness* is the

most interesting one. It is also the most difficult one to get at grips with, but good old Edgar Allan Poe gives some starting points: the short story is read in one sitting, and it displays a pre-established design, exhibiting itself in the narrative drive of the text. Other well-known criteria are: economy, complexity, intensity, and cohesion. More interesting is Pascos dictum that “the fact of being short imposes certain forms”. Brief texts, he says, are “oriented toward the present and presentness”; they also “tend to neglect process and development” in favor of a reality given “at the beginning, empirically, sensorially, as a global certitude whose eventual consequences are deduced in the course of the brief reading”. This means, according to Pasco, that

short stories are particularly suited for what might be called image (or descriptive) structure: that is, a work designed to produce not progressive understanding, based on a change from one state to another, which can be termed process (or narrative) structure, but an instantaneous grasp, where the reader suddenly perceives the whole. (Pasco 1993, p. \*\*\*)

This idea pertains to the wide-spread conception of *epiphany* as a structuring device of the *modernist* short story; but just as well (I gather) it pertains to the conception of turning point or anecdotal point as structuring the *pre-modern* exempla and novellas. — Be that as it may, the vital question is: “What happens because short stories are short?” Shortness demands economy, but the purport of economy is related to its *function*. (In this perspective even Proust might be said to economize his means.) In short fiction shortness produces *presentness* and prevents forgetfulness: short fiction must not rely on memory or remembrance. If it does, it transforms to a novel. In fact, shortness in short fictions both causes and aims at presentness. “Those forms of economy that require amplification are then beyond the short story's parameters.” And so are topics and subjects requiring much narrative information.<sup>5</sup>

Now, because every detail must be remembered, every detail also must be lucid and intense; and the overall structure must be compressed and condensed. Instead of amplification short fiction therefore makes use of indirection – “ellipsis, inference, the under- and un-stated”. Further, “Short

stories have a marked tendency toward unity, however fragmented, demented, or depressive that unity may be”, Pasco says. They are complex, and this complexity comes from *implication*. Finally, the short story tends towards the general and universal, however much narrative focus is on individuals. And since each detail is supposed to stand out of the text and grasp the reader’s attention, the reading habits of the short story, correspondingly, tend to symbolic readings of each luminous detail. On the other hand, this automatized habit some modernist short fictions actively counteract. Tage Aurell is one of them.

### The Swedish literary 1940s

In the Swedish ’s international High Modernism was in its flow, Realism was outmoded, and the Short Story was accepted as a highbrow literary kind of prose in the hierarchy of genres (S. Ferguson).<sup>6</sup> Poetry, of course was the leading genre, but the modernist short story came close: experimenting with poetic devices, and avoiding traditional *reality effects*.

At the same time, however, the short story was also seen as a severely commercialised lowbrow kind of literature: written for money, and produced for the reading masses in popular magazines. The short fictions of Tage Aurell himself were disregarded for more than ten years after his first book, *Tyberg’s Tenement*, in 1932. Then he was seen as a an author of meagre and boring local color stories in the realist tradition. After his break through in 1943, the same texts were seen as the work of an avant garde modernist, serving as a model to Aurell’s younger colleagues. That is: the reception of his work was quite *contradictory*. So what should the adequate reading conventions be?

### The weird Aurell

Aurell’s short stories rely on conventions, but they do not easily meet conventional reading habits, be they realist, modernist, or avant-garde. To begin with, his texts signal a *regionalism*,<sup>7</sup> which is realism, or even local colour realism (I insist);<sup>8</sup> but it is so highly selective that the traditional

reality effect is at once both disturbed *and* deepened.<sup>9</sup> This is held to be a modernist strategy – the metonymic chain of realism converted into metaphoric space; in particular, it is held to be the strategy of the modernist short story.<sup>10</sup> And yes, this conversion does take place in Aurell. But how modernist is it? No metaphors, are produced, and no images, and no symbols, as far as I can see. The focus is on what Tania Ørum (after George Perec) names the *infra-ordinary*, that is, ‘what is happening when nothing happens;’ meaning the insignificant things habitually left out of attention when focus is on what is considered ‘important.’<sup>11</sup> And these things are no symbols: they are just what they seem – ordinary things – *and that is why they are significant*. Really, their function *is* mimetic and referential: synecdochic representation of the everyday work and life of which they are parts.

These significant details create a deepened reality effect, indeed; but, in the same vein, they counteract not only traditional realism and symbolic readings; but also modernist forms of (deep)psychological realism (in the wake of Joyce or Woolf). This is because the selectiveness of the Aurell-text causes a high degree of *stylisation*, which holds psychologizing back.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the figures are no types. Rather they are some kind of *sensuous incarnations*, embodying deeply rooted social and existential attitudes and viewpoints. And as incarnations they also have the function of *examples*, that is *displaying* these attitudes and viewpoints.

And this is *not* a modernist trait, but an old-aged characteristic of short fiction, deriving from didactic tradition and the genre of *exemplum*. And in spite of all lucid concreteness, this is not realism either: it does not conform to the classical conventions of the great realist tradition, neither to modern conventions of verisimilar description. It is all *weird* – as long as you stick to the ‘natural’ modernist, or realist, or even short fictional, paradigms of reading and contextualising prose fictions of the period. I don’t know if there are any ‘unnatural’ ways of approaching my issue; but I’ll certainly try some of them in the end of this paper.

## Example: the exposition

Now, let's have a closer look at an excerpt from an Aurellian story:<sup>13</sup>

Down at the post office they have seen it.

Emil Flodman (who's filling in for the country mailman till the first of August) has seen it.

So has the old devil here at home.

From the tin [mailbox] over at the bend [krök, "svingen"] all the way here.

Then he puts the letter back on the chair where it was lying and takes the newspaper with him to the table, but not the letter.

Now Elin comes rattling [skramla] in through the door and, panting [flämta] puts the two water buckets down right on the threshold; she can't make it any farther because of her pain. When she sees that the letter is still lying there, her panting turns into a sigh—she had gone out to get the water as soon as she heard Enok start down the attic [vind] stairs.

And figured that by now he would have picked up the letter.

She feels in a quandary [villreda]—she often does now since she found out that she's ill.

Enok rivets [nagla fast] his eyes on the newspaper but sees nothing except the letter. A nasty [lett] letter; where the ring had been, there is now a hole right through the paper and the envelope. ("Until the Ringing of the Bell", 3)

This is the beginning of "Until the Ringing of the Bell", contained in the collection *Smärre berättelser (Lesser Stories)* of 1946 (title untranslatable). — You did not get much sense of the plot, did you? This is a *modernist* exposition: "no real 'beginning', since it plunges us into a flowing stream of experience with which we gradually familiarize ourselves by a process of inference and association", as David Lodge says about modernist fiction (1991: 45). The 'experience' here is not presented in psychological terms, but in terms of narrative focus on an external phenomenon—the hitherto unexplained "it". Thus, as Lodge puts it, "the structure of external 'objective' events essential to traditional narrative art" is here "diminished in scope and scale, or presented very selectively and obliquely, or is almost completely dissolved." The quoted passage from the Aurell-narrative is focussing on this unexplained "it", but (in the original Swedish edition) we are not informed about what "it" is until one page and a half later. And that first information is not very informative either: "A nasty letter," it is

said, and "where the ring had been, there is now a hole right through the paper and the envelope." How come? The answer is withheld another three pages; but in the meantime we read that Enok, the recipient of the letter, "tries to shift the wad bandages around what used to be his right hand" (4). Just like that—no explanation of how he lost his hand.

When we finally get to know, it is by *indirection*, while reading Enok's reading of the nasty letter. This narrative is a mixture of fragments: three disjointed voices are here interwoven—the mediating narrator's, the letter-writing fiancée's, and the reading Enok's:

Right at the beginning there is a hole and words missing where the ring was cut out. From what he can decipher, things aren't now the way they were when she came to the hospital during the visiting hour. "You may never believe it," he reads. "But please understand, Enok. It's not so easy for me either. Maybe it's harder for me" (Elin's thought, as different as they may be otherwise). "You know there are artificial hands that are almost as good as real hands. You can move them at the wrist." Here she's turned the paper, and again the hole is there, but he gathers from the words on both sides of the hole that it has to do with the price of such hands. "But what in heaven's name am I to do with myself? He is married. He wants me to keep the engagement ring, but I can't do that, Enok. I couldn't do that to you, so I am returning it to you here. I have kissed the date inside it farewell. He has three children; the youngest is just two. Awfully cute. But I'm crying at night." Another hole. Half a hole.

"I don't give a damn about your crying!" Enok tells the letter, tells his loneliness. (7)

However intertwined, these voices nevertheless exhibit quite different human attitudes and outlooks: the female naively unaware of the pain she has caused the male, but betraying her own distress; this distress the man, in his turn, 'doesn't give a damn'; both of them (of course) unable of pity for the other; and finally the narrator just passively reporting the occurrences of the hole in the paper.

By various kinds of indirection in the course of the narrative we are finally able to (*re*)*construct a story*: a peasant's son, who has had his hand cut off in an accident at the sawmill, receives a farewell-letter from his fiancée. This,

of course, is a double tragedy, but the tragic is backgrounded; foregrounded is the detail of the missing engagement ring; the previous fiancée writes that the ring is enclosed in the letter, but it is not; and the envelope has a cut out hole of the same shape as the missing ring. This little mystery—and what to do with the the young man’s pendant ring—is what the characters talk about; the tragedies, and the sufferings, mental and physical, are left in silence or laughed off—and yet they pop up everywhere, aside and parenthetically, forming some kind of a *leit motif*: ‘he (or she) is not the only one that’s got pain.’ Following the modernist lead, we might recognize some hardboiled or perhaps Imagist strains; we might suspect a Hemingwayan iceberg underneath, and within that iceberg perhaps even a Faulknerian volcano—as did some of Aurell’s contemporary critics in the Swedish 1940s. While others recognized him as a popular realist and regionalist...

But yes, the dramatic tensions are there, of course, disguised in substitute activities. Enok’s desperate efforts to pull his ring of his left finger with his non-existing right hand is a quite horrifying example:

How can he get that damned ring off his finger? He had put on weight at the hospital.

He scrapes it against the edge of the table; that wad of bandages doesn’t help him any. He can get the ring as far as his knuckle [knoge], and there it stops. He tries to use one of the vest buttons to pry it off [bända loss]. He’s wearing a vest now; he wears his Sunday best every day now.

Puts the wad of bandages over it and pinches [knipa, klämma] it down. But that never works.

Then he tries to get the ring between his teeth, tries to get a firm bite on it. The tips of his fingers slip down his throat and he almost vomits. He goes to get his shaving mirror to help him see what he’s doing, but instead he sees only his eyes bugging out. He raises the back of his hand up against his mouth and tries to press his ring finger against his front teeth.

It sends chills all the way up to the roots of his hair. At last he just sits there kind of jabbing [slå till] at the ring, feebly jabbing at it. There is sweat on his brow and his eyes are glassy from his useless effort, and his cheeks are white-streaked from his nearly throwing up. (9f.)

This struggle goes on for pages, ending only with the aid of his sister and a soap. The narrative has no closure; it just stops, as modernist fictions usually do: “ending is usually ‘open’ or ambiguous, leaving the reader in doubt as to the final destiny of the characters”, says Lodge. The final scene displays the somewhat macho father shaving himself with his knife before going out for his Saturday dance—without his wife, of course. From the physical pain she betrays in the exposition we may infer that she is deadly sick; but we may also guess that her husband doesn’t know.

### Modernist fiction?

Hitherto, I have presented Aurell’s texts as a case of *modernist* fiction—but that is not all there is to it. Now let’s take a look at the other side of the coin, that is the *realist* structure. For the alleged modernist exposition of the text is realist as well—overwhelmingly realist, in fact. What does that mean? The word *realism*, according to Astradur Eysteinnsson, has three dimensions:<sup>14</sup> it is, “first, a period term for the dominant trend of nineteenth-century [...] narrative fiction; second, a certain type of mimetic ([...] narrative) processing of objective reality, and third, a fictional or literary embodiment of the communicative language acknowledged by the ‘public sphere.’” (191) The first point is not relevant in Aurell’s case—for evident historical reasons. The second point is highly relevant (as I will show in a minute). The third point is most interesting, but also most delicate. It means that *realism is what readers are used to regard as verisimilar representation*. Realist discourse in literature, says, “is constantly nourished and motivated by the dominant modes of cultural representation in the respective society” (195). This means that the reality effect is a question of reading habits. As Jørgen Holmgaard writes, the realist impression of a course of events does not depend on its correspondence to logic or reality, but on its correspondence to the public’s expectations of consistence and truth.<sup>15</sup> Actually, the *reality effect* in literature, as described by Barthes, does not depend on representation of any course of event at all, but on *description*, that is on a *spatial*, non-narrative, device. And if spatializing

devices are fundamentals of modernist fiction (as is maintained), *then much realist fiction may be modernist*.

## Reconsidering the exposition

Returning to the exposition of Aurell's short story, we are now to note the realist pointers of the narrative, carefully selected as they are. The parenthetically mentioned country mailman signals a regional setting, as does the tin mailbox "over at the bend [krök]," the rattling [skramlande] water buckets, and the attic [vinds-] stairs. This setting is expanded in the following, sparingly, but just enough to keep the provincial expectations alive: this is far from the maddening—modern, urban—crowd. And yet, the persistent narrative focus on another detail is announcing quite a different story: the letter as a *threat*, yes, but still more the mysterious *hole* in the letter; the hole is the threat. And later on we even learn that the letter is urban in origin: it is sent from the neighbour city where the girl, the previous fiancée, is working as a maid.

Without saying so, the narrative also implies that the threat is a *shame*. This is because of the many repetitions of the fact that "it"—the letter—is *seen* by other people. Thus, another foregrounded 'realistic' detail takes on a special significance, *nota bene*, without losing its mimetic and referential function. For in the countryside you are always seen, never alone, however lonely you may feel.

Finally, we also get signs of the sister's illness: the pain is repeatedly mentioned, as in passing, in the narrative act—but never in the fictional universe, never by the fictional persons. And this unspoken detail pops up while Enok is reading the letter—prompted by the girl's egocentric phrase "But please understand, Enok. It's not so easy for me either. Maybe it's harder for me." Then the narrative seem to switch to the narrator's discourse, displaying this reminiscence within parentheses: "(*Elin's* thoughts, as different as they may be otherwise)." But what do the parentheses mean? That is: who is speaking here? And to whom does the perspective belong?

We cannot know for sure. But clearly, at this very point of the story a universal moral dimension opens up: issues of empathy and compassion emerges, as well as the problem of forgiveness. In uttering his "I don't give a damn about your crying!" Enok seems to slam this door. But the narrator's additional information about the addressee weakens the bang: "... Enok tells the letter, tells his loneliness." The interpretation is handed over to the reader—and so are the moral issues. The remaining parts of the narrative are just variations on this theme, elucidating its different aspects, and thereby deepening the problematics.

## Weird approaches

Thus, I gather, this modernist-realist short story may also be an avant-garde contribution to the traditions of the didactic *exemplum* and devotional literature: now moralising without a moral. This is not as weird a hypothesis as it may seem. For sure, the modernist context of the Swedish 1940s was interwoven with receptions of Hemingway and Faulkner, as well as Eliot and Pound. But nevertheless several of the leading new authors were fostered into quite different traditions of Christian belief, the Bible, and popular devotional literature—Lars Ahlin, Thorsten Jonsson, Karl Vennberg, for instance; and this heritage is quite readable in their work, atheistic or not.

Tage Aurell himself grew up in near contact with different popular movements of his home town Karlstad: the religious revivalist movement as well as the Labour Movement. In his youth he even considered becoming a clergyman, and all his life he was said to be a Christian communist (R. Matsson).

Further, his deepest literary imprints were neither modernist nor anglo-saxian, but the great traditions of French and Scandinavian literature. Namely: Stendhal, Baudelaire, and, in particular, Flaubert; and Herman Bang, Sigbjørn Obstfelder, and Hans Kinck. That is: masters of "short literary prose fictions", whether in the form of short fiction, novel, or prose poem.

This biographical information may be somewhat beside the point of my paper, I admit, but it is worth mentioning in order to constitute an adequate comparative context. And in this context, what seems weird or unnatural in the realist or modernist perspective, turns out to be quite in order. Or rather: in quite an *intriguing* order.



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\* Slightly different version published in *European and Nordic Modernisms*. Eds. Mats Jansson, Jakob Lothe, Hannu Riikonen. Norvik Press, 2004. Pp. 81–96.

<sup>1</sup> Modernism, according to Eysteinsson, Astradur: “resists reality-fabrications that are recuperable as “stories” or as situations that can readily be reformulated in sociopragmatic terms” (187). It is “a practice that works in opposition to rational and realist discourse but that, in its “negativity,” only preserves its significance and its signifying power against the (·) background of the tradition that produces and legitimatizes that discourse” (205).

Modernist fiction, according to Lodge, David. *The Modes of Modern Writing. Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (1977). London, New York, Sydney, Auckland: Arnold, 1997:

Modernist fiction, then, is • experimental or innovatory in form, displaying marked deviations from preexisting modes of discourse, literary and non-literary. Modernist fiction is • concerned with consciousness, and also with the subconscious and unconscious workings of the human mind. Hence the • structure of external ‘objective’ events essential to traditional narrative art is diminished in scope and scale, or presented very selectively and obliquely, or is almost completely dissolved, • in order to make room for introspection, analysis, reflection and reverie. A modernist novel has • no real ‘beginning’, since it plunges us into a flowing stream of experience with which we gradually familiarize ourselves by a process of inference (46:) and association; and its ending is usually ‘open’ or ambiguous, leaving the reader in doubt as to the final destiny of the characters. To compensate for the diminution of narrative structure and unity, • alternative methods of aesthetic ordering become more prominent, such as allusion to or imitation of literary models or mythical archetypes, and the repetition-with-variation of motifs, images, symbols—a technique variously described as ‘rhythm’, ‘Leitmotif’ and ‘spatial form’. Modernist fiction • eschews the straight chronological ordering of its

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material, • and the use of a reliable, omniscient and intrusive narrator. It employs, instead, either a single, limited point of view, or a method of multiple points of view, all more or less limited and fallible: and it tends towards a fluid or complex handling of time, involving much cross-reference backwards and forwards across the chronological span of the action. (45)

<sup>2</sup> Realism enligt LODGE: “the representation of experience in a manner which approximates closely to descriptions of similar experience in nonliterary texts of the same culture.” (25) — “the power of making events, whether invented or factually based, convincingly ‘present’ to the reader” (25) — “It is a tradition which depends upon certain assumptions, especially the assumption that there is a common phenomenal world that may be reliably described by the methods of empirical history, located where the private worlds that each individual creates and inhabits partially overlap.” (40)

EYSTEINSSON: The concepts: “‘Realism’ is, first, a period term for the dominant trend of nineteenth-century literature, especially narrative fiction; second, a certain type of mimetic (and usually narrative) processing of objective reality, and third, a fictional or literary embodiment of the communicative language acknowledged by the ‘public sphere.’” (191). Stipulations: “realist discourse in literature is constantly nourished and motivated by the dominant modes of cultural representation in the respective society.” (195)

HOLMGAARD: “om et forløb virker realistisk afhænger ikke af, om det er i overensstemmelse med logikken eller virkeligheden, men af at det er sådan indrettet, at det korresponderer med, hvad der er publikums forventninger om det følgerigtige og det sande. Med sine tætte tilknytning til retorikken ligger denne betragtningsmåde i Aristoteles’ poetik på linie med, hvad der først i de seneste årtiers realismeopfattelse er blevet god tone. (136)

ØRUM: “Det er utvivlsomt en realisme, der her er på færde – blot af en anden art end den, vi er vant til at betegne som realisme. Forskellen er bl.a., at denne modernistiske realisme ikke lader sig sammenfatte: Ikke blot er der ingen autoritativ fortæller til at resumere og vurdere – sandheden er heller ikke resumerbar, fordi den ligger i selve processen, fordi selve realismeeffekten beror på, hvorledes processen gennemløbes i sproget. Samtidig skaber stiliseringen af sproget en dobbelthed i teksten: på den ene side en indsigning i teksten, en identifikation mellem fortæller, personer og læser – på den anden side en forstærket opmærksomhed på sprogets overflade. Læseren ser ikke gennem teksten ud på en virkelighed, men bliver stadig gjort opmærksom på, hvordan de skildrede psykologiske konstellationer dannes i sproget. Gennem denne *foregrounding* af de sproglige virkemidler og sproget som materiale – som realismen per definition undgår – *fremkommer en ny form for realisme. en materialets realisme, som Stein har tilfælles med malerkunsten.*” (224)

<sup>3</sup> For sure, Pasco rejects theoretical definitions:

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Generic definitions based on devices, techniques, subject matter, in short on the short story's paradigm of interchangeable parts, have historically limited life and usefulness. Almost always, they exclude the preceding generation's creations, though the next generation takes revenge by rejecting these strategies for others. ("The Short story: The Short of It". *Style*, Fall93, Vol. 27 Issue 3, s. 442.)

<sup>4</sup> Which is to say: *fiction* means that the truth value of the story is irrelevant; *story* means a casually and chronologically construed narrative. Seen in connection with fiction this means a tendency to graphic lucidity, description, and picture, in other words an emphasis on *spatial form* (Joseph Frank) or *image structure*. *Literary* means "an aesthetic unit", however the aesthetic criteria are defined – and in the literary tradition they do differ: it is "the effort to make art" that counts; and this effort, according to Pasco, is always discernible. *Prose* means that rhythm and meter are not dominant elements (in R. Jakobson's sense), as in e.g. the fabliau. *Short* – the most difficult criterion, but Poe gives some starting points: 1. read in one sitting; 2. a pre-established design, exhibiting itself in the narrative drive of the text, although neither an anecdotal point or an epiphany is needed; 3. economy – sparing space, avoiding unnecessary repetitions, but keeping the necessary (poetic) ones; 4. complexity – deep of implication, ellipsis; 5. cohesion – the narrative process successively developing the primary givens (*matrix*).

<sup>5</sup> Pasco: "Since the authors of short stories cannot pause to instruct in detail, they have to assume considerable background on the part of their reader, a background that may or may not be present in a particular individual at a particular time. [...] short stories are unable to incorporate the widespread, systematic redundancies that occur in the novel."

<sup>6</sup> Suzanne Ferguson, "The Rise of the Short Story in the Hierarchy of Genres", *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, ed. Susan Lohafer & Jo Ellyn Clarey, Baton Rouge & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989, pp. 176-192.

<sup>7</sup> REGIONALISM A literary subgenre that emphasizes the setting, history speech, DIALECT, and customs of a particular geographical locale or area, not only for LOCAL COLOR but also to develop universal THEMES through the use of the local and particular. Willa CATHER, William FAULKNER, Ellen GLASGOW, and Robert Penn Warren are notable examples of American writers who used regionalism. (*Companion to the American Short Story*. Ed. Abby H.P. Werlock. New York; Checkmark Books, 2000, 363).

<sup>8</sup> The speech, DIALECT, customs, and other features characteristic of a certain region provide the local color in a work of fiction. In the late 19th century a number of American writers consciously incorporated local color to enhance the REALISM of their work. (Op.cit., 270)

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<sup>9</sup> The Reality Effect, in fact, is based on synchrony and spatialization – description – rather than on diachrony and temporalization – action, plot. That is the impact of Stendhal's dictum of *les petites faits vrais*. Se Holmgaard, Jørgen, "Realisme og narrativitet. Om narrativ kausalitet". *Gensyn med realismen*. Red. Jørgen Holmgaard. Skrifter fra Center for Æstetik og Logik, Aalborg universitet, vol. 1. Aalborg: Center for Æstetik og Logik / Medusa, 1996. Ss. 127–166:

En spontan realisme-fornemmelse og mange definitioner vil pege i en retning, som uden at specificere det vil søge mod deskriptionssiden, tekstens synkroner elementer. Realisme er genkendelige mennesketyper placeret i fiktionsrum, der ligner virkelighedens. Den diakrone linie fra den basale handlingssammenkædning op til den store forløbsstruktur vil aldrig eller sjældent indgå. (145)

- "Fornemmelsen af realisme udspringer ikke af synkronien, af deskriptionselementerne alene. Den udspringer af den kausale handlingssammenkædning. Den kan til gengæld være meget forskellig. Som Aristoteles fra mange vinkler påviser, afhænger vores vurdering af teksten ikke af forholdet mellem tekst og virkelighed med sidstnævnte som den stabile reference. Det afhænger af forholdet mellem tekstens konstruktion, og hvad der er almindeligt antaget som sandsynligt og virkeligt. (146)

I forhold til tragedien er den narrative kausalitet om ikke tilstrækkelig, så dog tæt ved; i forhold til realismen er den kun en nødvendig forudsætning. Den tilstrækkelige forudsætning for realismen kommer først til i takt med, at den udførlige prosadeskription over for dagliglivets personer, ting og situationer udvikler sig (136:) og forbinder sig med en kausalt orienteret organiseringsform. Men realismens narrative, diakrone halvdel – om man så må sige – findes allerede udviklet i tragedien og beskrevet hos Aristoteles. (135f)

Cf. Smith, Mack. *Literary Realism and the Ekphrastic Tradition*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State U.P., 1995.

<sup>10</sup> See Lodge, op.cit. As for the modernist short story, Ch. E. May insists on this metaphoric-metonymic structure, which he also labels *realism* :

[...] in spite of what seems to be a realistic style in which events are motivated primarily by metonymic sequence and verisimilitude, modern realistic stories are still able to create a metaphoric sense of reality.

"The metonymic style of realism in the modern short story compels the reader to transform sequence into equivalence and to spatialize the temporal



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in order to make metaphorically meaningful that which at first seems merely contiguous (124).

Realism in the modern short story from Chekhov to Carver creates metaphorically meaningful reality by focusing on metonymic detail in a highly compressed, highly patterned form.

<sup>11</sup> “det, der sker, når der ingenting sker, det hverdagslige og banale, baggrundsstøjen, det vi vanemæssigt plejer at si fra for at fokusere på bestemte ting både i livet og på skrift.” (Tania Ørum. “Modernismens realisme”. *Gensyn med realismen*. Red. Jørgen Holmgaard. Skrifter fra Center for Æstetik og Logik, Aalborg universitet, vol. 1. Aalborg: Center for Æstetik og Logik / Medusa, 1996. Ss. 207–243, 219)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ørum, op.cit. on Gertrude Stein’s imagism: in her work, the characterization of the persons is translated into language; and yet the mimetic and referential functions subsist – language and form are inseparable from a human universe. So there is no question about “et enten-eller, mellem det mimetisk-referentielle og det sprogligt-formelle: Det, som sker hos Stein, er, at personkarakteristikken oversættes til sprog. Det drejer sig ikke blot, som i megen anden litteratur (fra Dickens til Joyce), om at benytte den direkte tale som middel til at differentiere og karakterisere personerne ved hjælp af deres stemme. Hos Stein oversættes personernes bevidsthed til sproglige mønstre, snarere end de beskrives eller afsløres i sproget. (222.) Det er ikke noget udenfor foreliggende, som beskrives i sproget. Men i selve sprogets bevægelsesform opstår de perceptions- og samtaleformer, som skildres, i en art *performativt sprog* - sprog, som gør det, det handler om, og dermed også inddrager læseren i den proces, teksten og personerne gennemløber.” (221f.)

<sup>13</sup> Aurell, Tage. “Until the Ringing of the Bell”. *The Rose of Jericho, and Other Stories by Tage Aurell*. Trans. M. S. Allwood. In consultation with Tage and Kathrine Aurell. With an Introduction by Eric O. Johannesson. Madison, Milwaukee, London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968. (In this paper, the translations are slightly modified – ‘literalised’, so to speak.)

<sup>14</sup> Eysteinnsson, Astradur. *The Concept of Modernism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Holmgaard: “om et forløb virker realistisk afhænger ikke af, om det er i overensstemmelse med logikken eller virkeligheden, men af at det er sådan indrettet, at det korresponderer med, hvad der er publikums forventninger om det følgerigtige og det sande.”