Modernist Technique and Provincial Life: Tage Aurell as Prose Artist

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Abstract

Tage Aurell's breakthrough as an author came in the early 1940s, about a decade after his debut. His narrative technique is very distinctive, and some of his short stories are minor classics, but he is not among the best-known Swedish authors of the twentieth century. While Aurell travelled and studied in Europe in the 1920s, during the age of high modernism, he then settled in the village of Mangskog in Western Sweden. From this rural vantage point he wrote most of his laconic and profoundly local stories. My aim in this article is to show how the laconism and fragmentary style of Aurell's texts entails the creation of new artistic forms. Examples of his narrative technique are gathered from 'Pingstbrud' ('The Whitsun Bride'), 'Grindstolpe' ('Gatepost') and 'Gamla landsvägen' ('The Old Highway'). In 'Pingstbrud', Aurell depicts in sparse scenes a rural community and how it reacts to the illness and death of a young woman. In 'Grindstolpe', two very different kinds of stories are intertwined in an unusual way. 'Gamla landsvägen' is Aurell's most experimental text, a montage. I show the resemblance with Guillaume Apollinaire's poem 'Lundi Rue Christine', and propose that Aurell looks at his rural village through the lens of modernism. Although the village people he describes seem hardly influenced by modernity, his textual composition is modernist. In these and other short stories Aurell renewed 1940s Swedish prose in a remarkable way.

Keywords

Tage Aurell, Swedish literature, modernist technique, short stories, provincial modernism

Introduction

Tage Aurell (1895–1976) is not among the most famous twentieth-century Swedish authors, but as a creator of novellas and short stories which are considered minor national classics, he is held in high esteem by his readers. Thomas Anderberg, for example, describes Aurell's authorship as one of the most singular of the twentieth century (Anderberg 1991: 23).

Aurell's breakthrough as an author came rather late, in the early 1940s, in an era when several younger Swedish authors started writing in an experimental, modernist way, notably in prose. Several of them became his friends and supporters (Andersson 1995: 240). Aurell was older than most of the recently famous authors at the time, but he was celebrated as a writer from the countryside with distinctive first-hand experience of the famous modernist circles in Paris and other European cities. Among his friends were also Gunnar Björling (1887–1960), who in fact was older than Aurell, and Rabbe Enckell (1903–1974), both of them Finland-Swedish modernist poets. According to their correspondence, Aurell appreciated Björling's poetry — perhaps the most laconic and experimental modernist poetry in the Swedish language at the time — very much.[1] Björling even visited Aurell and his family. Without doubt, Aurell could keep company with experimental modernists as well as with ordinary farmers or lumberjacks.

However, scholars and critics have not agreed on how to characterise Aurell's literary work in relation to modernism more broadly. This article explores an ostensible paradox in Aurell's writing: that his innovative contributions to modernism were written from, and about, the rural periphery. Offering close textual analyses of three short stories of the 1940s — 'Pingstbrud', 'Grindstolpe' and 'Gamla Landsvägen' — I aim to show how the voices of the provincial everyday were used by Aurell as a basis for his modernist narrative renewal. The three stories are among the most interesting regarding his style and narrative technique. First, though, a brief discussion of Aurell's encounter with international modernism is in order.

Aurell's international experience

In 1919 Aurell left Sweden for Paris, and for most of the 1920s he travelled and lived abroad, not only in France, but in Germany, Austria and Norway. In Paris he met artists of several kinds. He visited the studio of Marc Chagall (Andersson 1995: 295), attended receptions hosted by André Gide (110) and studied the aesthetic ideas of Jacques Copeau and his followers regarding contemporary French drama (126). Copeau regarded too much scenic expression as inartistic (Copeau 1990: 84), and this appealed to Aurell's own reflections on art. Copeau 'eliminated the distracting ornamentation' in drama (Kurtz 1999: 80), and so too did Aurell in his writing.

Aurell also met Russian immigrants, such as the famous politician and refugee Alexandr Kerenskij and the future winner of the Nobel Prize in literature Ivan Bunin (Matsson 1970: 39, Andersson 1995: 90). In Salzburg he attended drama repetitions managed by Max Reinhardt on Domplatz, and he visited the author Stefan Zweig (Andersson 1995: 107–9). During his stays in Berlin he regularly visited a gallery in Potsdamerstrasse where the expressionist Herwarth Walden and other members of the avant-garde, connected with the journal *Der Sturm*, resided. Aurell himself related that he met famous artists such as Kokoschka, Kandinsky and Klee in Walden's home (Matsson 1970: 41–2, Andersson 1995: 114). Aurell did not write much about these encounters, but he was well-informed about the new modernist ideas and aesthetic forms that were influencing all the Arts in most European countries at the time.[2] He even wrote an essay (Aurell 1921) about Arthur Rimbaud, who was appreciated by the surrealists, in 1921, and later on he translated novels by Franz Kafka into Swedish.[3]

At the beginning of the 1930s, Aurell and his wife settled down in the small rural village Mangskog in the province of Värmland, Sweden — rather a contrast to the large European cities he had recently visited. In 1932 he made his debut with *Tybergs gård* (Tyberg's Tenement), a novella that was sparing with words, had no protagonist, and no plot on the macro level. It is all about ordinary people, of whose lives we only get short glimpses in the text. Most of the fictional works that followed can be described as laconic stories from the countryside.

Aurell's home village was — compared to the big cities with which he was familiar — hardly influenced by modernity at all in that period. What, then, are we to make of his literary modernism?

Situating Aurell's modernism

Scholars have written extensively about how to define modernism in literature. Some of them emphasise the importance of modern life in expanding cities, new technical innovations and new senses of perception as very important for the new art forms. Others accentuate a sense of loss in a new secular world, where not even the personal 'I' is a stable entity. These experiences are accordingly expressed in new, fragmentary ways. In this short article, space precludes an in-depth exploration of theories of modernism. However, a few key interventions have informed my reading of Aurell's narratives.

Sara Danius considers 'modernism' to be 'a word with a notoriously vague meaning', and she adds: 'by European modernism I understand an umbrella term covering a vast variety of cultural practices, not merely experimental prose and poetry but also the historical avant-garde movements' (Danius 1998: 5). Michael H. Whitworth accentuates both formal qualities in texts and the cultural context: 'A theory of modernism that could not make reference to the formal features of the work would be an impoverished one. However, a theory which comprehends the relation between those formal features and the deeper cultural upheaval is richer than a theory which acknowledges both aspects without relating them' (Whitworth 2007: 5). Building on the work of Marjorie Perloff and others, he adds that '[m]odernist literature depicts modern life, especially urban life', and 'the modernist text appears fragmentary' (Whitworth 2007: 11). Marshall Berman also indicates in his *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, notably in a chapter about Baudelaire, the intimate unity between a modern 'I' and a modern environment (Berman 1988).

In literary discussions, a central issue seems to be whether one can be a modernist without writing in particular about experiences of modernity such as expanding cities. In this article I want to show how Tage Aurell uses various modernist techniques in his prose art,

although many motifs are traditional and the settings are rural.[4] Thereby, I argue, he renewed the Swedish literary mode of the time. He wrote in new ways about everyday life, its common trivialities, its repressed feelings, and its private, silent tragedies.

Astraður Eysteinsson asserts that modernism avoids 'story-telling in any traditional sense' (Eysteinsson 1990: 187), and I propose that Aurell is not an ordinary realist story-teller at all. He is a careful constructor of prose arts. In the following I want to present and discuss some examples of his narrative technique. The English translations are by M.S. Allwood from *Rose of Jericho, and other stories*, published in 1968.

'Pingstbrud'

Aurell's most famous short story is entitled 'Pingstbrud' ('The Whitsun Bride'), published in 1949 as part of the collection called *Nya berättelser* (New Stories). At the centre of the story is a young woman, Karin, who falls ill one chilly springtime. One night on her way home from a dance pavilion she had been sitting on the loading platform on a truck. After that trip she caught a serious cold. In the story we follow her illness and death, and how people in the village react in different ways to these unexpected events. At the beginning of the story, Karin, her mother, and Elvira, the seamstress, are waiting for the bus. They are going to see the doctor. Aurell omits the visit itself, but we meet the three of them again on their way home in the bus. Let us look at how he describes this:

> De vänder åter med sista bussen. Den det är minst folk med.
> Snopna.
> Rädda.
> – Liksom tomhänta, säger Elvira.
> Fast de hade både bakelsekartong och blommor och tyget.
> Och öppenhjärtiga, plötsligt öppenhjärtiga med det lilla de har att förtälja.
> Snopna för att det inte är mer –
> – Hem och i säng! var allt han sagt. Raka vägen! Och vete

djävulen hur det här går –

Han hade varit på sitt allra buffligaste, men bufflig på det viset blev han ju bara när det gällde livet – det är det som ter sig så orimligt, det är därför de ger sig så god tid den kilometern de har kvar ifrån vägskälet och hem.

Sammalunda hade de gjort inne i stan, suttit och kurat nästan tre timmar på matserveringen innan de tog den folktommaste bussen.

Men så kan han ju inte ha ment i alla fall. När han ändå inte behöll henne inne på sjukstugan –

– Där de ligger som sardiner i en ask! säger Elvira.

Och det kan ju hända. Men när han sände med medicin och uttryckligen sa att hon skulle bli hemma så har han naturligtvis inte ment att hon så här utan vidare –

– skulle dö?

De kan se att folk rycker till nu.
(Aurell 1949: 8–9)

(They come back on the last bus. The one with the fewest passengers.
Baffled.
Frightened.
"Empty-handed-like," says Elvira.
Although they had both the cake box and flowers and the material.
And completely openhearted, suddenly completely openhearted with what little they have to tell.
Baffled because there's no more.
"Home and to bed!" was all he had said. "Right away. Damned if I know how this will end up."
He had been at his very roughest; yet he got rough like that only when a life was at stake, didn't he—that's what seems so absurd, that's why they give themselves plenty of time for the kilometer they have to go from the crossroads home.
They had done just the same in town, had sat cowering for almost three hours in the eating house before they took the

emptiest bus.
But he surely couldn't have meant it like that. When he didn't even keep her in there at the hospital—
"Where they're lying like sardines in a can," says Elvira.
And that may be so. But when he gave them some medicine and told her expressly that she must stay home, he couldn't possibly have meant that she was simply—
"… going to die?"
They can see that people start at this.)
(Aurell 2004: 63–4)

This part of the text is characterised by shifts between utterances or cues that can be attributed to some of the characters, parts that seem to be representations of their thoughts, and short connecting statements. As readers we feel that we are, all the time, very close to the characters and their joint perspective, characterised by uncertainty and concern. But the text must be read and understood in its entirety, otherwise the small parts will look rather peculiar. For example, Elvira's first utterance is really difficult to understand in isolation. It is as if the author sometimes comes close enough to his characters, so he can hear and transmit what they say. The other short portions of direct speech are constructed in similar ways. It does not seem to be important whether there are short summaries or comments, direct speech or representation of thoughts. The text will function as a whole, but it is constructed of small parts of very different kinds. We are not quite familiar with these techniques in traditional realist art. As readers we come close to the situation, but not to the characters in a personal, psychological way. 'Pingstbrud' is a stylised aesthetic construction made for the readers' contemplation of the conditions of life.

We notice how Aurell puts solitary words on two of the lines, and even the words '– skulle dö?' seem to be marked by their special position. The placing of the words 'snopna' and 'rädda' in isolation seems to underline the characters' feelings in an iconic way. We know this strategy from lyric poetry, of course. The author uses some lyrical techniques in other parts of the story too, for example repetitive phrases and acoustic patterns, but the short story is not lyrical in any traditional sense. The

reader will not be immersed in a particular mood, but the text is made for existential reflection.

'Pingstbrud' is a story about ordinary people in a rural village — their solidarity, social control of each other and curiosity — and their common conditions. After a few introductory pages the text switches between Karin's sickroom and other parts of the village, where people react in different ways to her illness. Common outdoor life is then contrasted with the young woman's predicament. As readers we never come to know her psychologically in any depth, and she becomes a kind of 'empty centre' in the text. However, her illness directs the attention of all the other characters towards her room and what happens there, and finally she sends 'ett bud från dödsbädden till de unga här i bygden som nu en middagstimme får finna sig i att hon i kraft av sin utkorelse är deras föresatte en stund. Budet om Skaparen i din ungdom.' (Aurell, 1949: 23) ('a message from the deathbed to the young people of this countryside, who during the noon hour have to submit to her being their superior for a little while by virtue of her election. The message of the Creator in the days of thy youth.') (Aurell 2004: 70). At the end of the quoted text the author is alluding to *Ecclesiastes* 12:1. The story ends with her death, and all the people of the village come together on her funeral day.

Everything in 'Pingstbrud' is told in rather few, carefully selected words, in a reduced or 'cut' narration. Out of carefully selected details Aurell composes lifeworlds. As mentioned, we as readers will not really become familiar with any of the characters; that is not the author's aim. Because the text quickly switches from one place or situation to another, readers feel that they can get a near-comprehensive understanding of how people in the village react. Individuals are described as parts of the collective sensibility, although space is provided for individual differences, too. The sense of the vulnerability of life, so clearly manifested in the fate of the young woman, co-exists in the end with a will to go on with the ordinary work in days to come, even in this hard and chilly spring. People don't have any other choice.

Beata Agrell considers that Aurell's short stories 'do not invite conventional reading habits, be they realist, Modernist, or avant-garde' (Agrell 2004: 83), and that is a good observation. 'Pingstbrud' is not

his most experimental text, but quick changes of scenes and collective or unattributed voices occur. We are much more familiar with that kind of writing in modernist texts than in conventional realist ones. Sverker Göransson writes: 'hans raffinerade berättarteknik och kräsna stilkonst är i linje med mellankrigsmodernismens strävanden' (Göransson, 1997: 239) (his exquisite narrative technique and fastidious diction is along the lines and aspirations of the modernism of the Interwar Years). I think Göransson is right, but Aurell never wrote in accordance with any particular modernist dogma; he uses various new writing strategies.

'Grindstolpe'

'Grindstolpe' ('Gatepost') was published in a volume of short stories called *Smärre berättelser* (Shorter Tales) in 1946. The story begins *in medias res*, as so often in Aurell's texts, with a farmer talking about his cows. One of them has just calved out on the grazing land, and at first people on the farm couldn't find the calf. Gradually the reader recognises that the intradiegetic listener is another man, and the two men have met at a gatepost. However, this is not a conventional story, or a dialogue about rural life. Johannes Åsbom, whose name we as readers get to know just at the end of the story, is talking about his cows in order to take the other man's mind off the life-threatening diagnosis he has just received from his doctor. Åsbom's talk has a kind of performance quality, and it is filled with a lot of curses and some colloquial language. However, the other man is scarcely a good listener at all; his mind is filled with the information he has just got, and the reader can get access to his thoughts through different narrative means. Sometimes there are minor descriptions of his behaviour, or reports of his thoughts rendered in free indirect discourse. The stylistic or narrative means may vary, but what is important is that readers can access the perspective of this unnamed man in his difficult situation. That he is not even given a name increases the sense of the possible universality of his situation.

Typographically, Åsbom's talk is introduced or marked with a dash, while the lines rendering the perspective of the other man are in parentheses. The two different parts of 'Grindstolpe' are thus intertwined but separated until the end. Åsbom's story seems rather

trivial compared to the loneliness and vulnerability of the other man, expressed by his memories, other thoughts and gestures. He is now excluded from 'ordinary' rural life, where such things as calves are of great importance. His silence and thoughts are really more important than the oral performance. Why, then, is Åsbom telling his story? At the end of 'Grindstolpe' we can read the following lines: ' – Det var bra, säger Åsbom till sina kvinnfolk vid kvällspotatisen. – Det var bra att jag hade den här historien om kalven att förvilla honom med. För det såg jag ju strax. Det såg jag så väl vad doktorn hade sagt' (Aurell 1946: 158) ('"It was a good thing," Åsbom tells his womenfolk over the supper potatoes. "It was a good thing I had this story about the calf to take his mind off it. Because of course I could see it right away. I could see perfectly well what the doctor had told him."') (Aurell 2004: 59). His intentions are genuinely good; he wants to take the other man's mind off the information about his serious illness. It is a kind of superficial benevolence, but he never seems to imagine what it would be like to talk about the illness itself. To be a male in this rural area seems to include a kind of heroic attitude, even in cases of lethal illness. The man standing in distressed silence at the gatepost doesn't want the other people to know about his disease. Åsbom is, then, performing his story about the calf in order to help his intended listener control his feelings, but he is not addressing the real problem. Similarly, the author represents thoughts and memories of the silent man in a rather controlled form. There is no desperate stream of consciousness, no anguish that erupts into the language. This also chimes with the common picture we get of the social setting in the story. A great outburst would not be mandated; the pain is an inner, concealed one.

Aurell is an elaborate composer of textual parts. The inner world of the anonymous man is contrasted with the outer world of commonplace and rural work. The textual twinning of the two stories increases the differences, and the strict ordering of the two parts strengthens this distance. The text has an iconic dimension; even the form shows the abyss between the two lifeworlds. They never meet in a real dialogue. This kind of textual ordering anticipates the bold montage of 'Gamla landsvägen' ('The Old Highway'), which is Aurell's most experimental text.

'Gamla landsvägen'

Aurell's short story 'Gamla landsvägen' was published in *Nya berättelser* (New Stories, 1949) but there is hardly a story in it at all. We are privy to very small fragments from a lot of life stories, told by people walking along a road or visiting a shop in an unnamed village. The reader will imagine that he or she is listening to their voices. Some small parts of the text consist of narration and citations, for example from the Old Testament and Emmanuel Swedenborg, blended with these voices from people's everyday lives.

This way of rendering voices from a street, a shop or a restaurant was something new in early modernist poetry. One well-known example is Guillaume Apollinaire's 'Lundi Rue Christine' (1912). The distinguishing quality of this poem is the elimination of the lyric 'I'. The poet seems just to register voices, and there is no centre at all. I quote some lines from the beginning of the poem purely for comparison:

> La mère de la concierge et la concierge laisseront tout passer
> Si tu es un homme tu m'accompagneras ce soir
> Il suffirait qu'un type maintînt la porte cochère
> Pendant que l'autre monterait
>
> Trois becs de gaz allumés
> La patronne est poitrinaire
> Quand tu auras fini nous jouerons une partie de jacquet
> Un chef d'orchestre qui a mal à la gorge
> Quand tu viendras à Tunis je te ferai fumer du kief
> (Apollinaire 1980: 52)
>
> (The concierge's mother and the concierge will let everyone through
> If you're a man you'll come with me tonight
> All we need is one guy to watch the main entrance
> While the other goes upstairs

Three gas burners lit
The proprietress is consumptive
When you've finished we'll play a game of backgammon
An orchestra leader who has a sore throat
When come through Tunis we'll smoke some hashish)
(Apollinaire 1980: 53, translation Anne Hyde Greet)

Hans-Robert Jauss writes in an analysis that this text has withheld the reader at a distance from 'that meaning which the quoted fragment […] surely possessed in its original context' (Jauss 1988: 49). It is a kind of estrangement or defamiliarisation, reminding us of what Marcel Duchamp attains in his 'ready-mades', he writes (Jauss 1988: 50). Jauss adds that this technique is close to strategies that Joyce later developed in *Ulysses*.

In 'Gamla landsvägen' there are, as mentioned, some small elements of narration and literary citations in addition to the rendered voices, and this is not the case in the poem by Apollinaire. But there are a lot of similarities. The works are both montage-texts. Ross Murfin and Supryia Ray give the following definition of montage: 'a composite of several different and typically unrelated elements that are juxtaposed and arranged to create or elicit a particular mood, meaning or perception' (Murfin and Ray 2003: 273-4). A montage is a well-known modernist art form, with its origin in film. It can call forth a special mood by its technique of quick change, and of just showing, not telling in an ordinary way at all. In Walter Benjamin's famous *Das Passagenwerk*, which is also a montage, we can read: 'Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen' (Benjamin 1982: 574) (I have nothing to say. Just show). But to record or mention the fragments or the trash is to pay attention to it; to make it an object of consideration. Let us look at a sample from 'Gamla landsvägen'.

– Kanske han ligger vaken ibland om natten. Och gråter för han ingen mamma har. Det har jag tänkt mig –

– Det var gott kaffe det här, sa jag. Det är väl aldrig av den nya rågen? Snåljåpa! La hon tre böner på så inte var det mer. Och

vred hon kvarnen ett helt varv så var det inte mer det heller.

– Solen sjunker nu. Så går en dag än från vår tid. Och kommer aldrig mer ja. Det är väl det. För fy fan!
– Hon blir inte begraven denna söndag. Det passar inte då. Utan hon blir balsamerad så länge. Och inne på begravningsbyrån trodde de hon nog skulle hålla sig.
Hennes enfödde kommer från skolan med ny geografi och ny kartbok.
– Det här skall bli roligt att lära sig, säger hon. Spanien. Och Asien –
(Aurell 1949: 77–8)

("Maybe he lies awake sometimes at night. And cries because he has no mother. That's what I've imagined myself. …

"'Say, this is good coffee,' I said. 'It's not the new rye is it?' Stingy female! She put in three coffee beans, at the most, I'll bet. And if she turned the handle of the grinder once around, that'd be the utmost, too."

"Now the sun is setting. So one more day goes from our time. And never comes again, oh yes. That's a good thing! Because it's been a hell of a day!"
"She won't be buried this Sunday. It's not convenient then. In the meantime she will be embalmed. And in at the undertaker's, they thought she'd keep."
Her only child comes home from school with a new geography book and a new atlas.
"It's going to be fun learning this," she says. "Spain. And Asia. …")
(Aurell 2004: 99)

Any kind of a complete narrative is considered insufficient here. The aim of the author is not to follow a single protagonist in the way realistic stories often do. Here, the forgotten or the trivial is transformed into something valuable, for there is an expectation that the pieces in a

montage will create, or at least point to, some kind of wholeness. This is not the case in, for example, a collection of aphorisms. The wholeness must be naturalised or reconstructed as a 'world' out of the fragments. The mood is a collective one, rendered by these voices — trivial, tragic or humorous — but there is no common purpose discernible at all among these village people, no political ideas or ambitions for structural change. This is also the case in Aurell's first novella, *Tybergs gård*.[5] Together the unknown characters on the highway perform what can be called 'life in the village'. It is as though they were members of a local 'choir'. The solo voice is just a part of this choir, and that is its entire function. In a similar way Edgar Lee Masters renders voices to the former inhabitants of his fictive town Spoon River. I do not want to claim that Masters explicitly influenced Aurell, but in *Spoon River Anthology* the entirety of voices is what matters, too.[6] The sole poem is just a part.

'Gamla landsvägen' can be called realist on a micro level. The language in the separate utterances is not decomposed or broken. But the text as a whole is a modernist one; it uses the montage as a new form of rendering a special mood attached to characters in circumstances and settings reminding us of life in a Swedish rural village in the 1940s. Whether the voices are authentic or not is not an important question at all. Aurell certainly often constructed his stories on the basis of real events or persons, but his aim was not to write factual stories. He transformed and fictionalised what he heard in the neighbourhood, but his fiction is close to reality.

Conclusion

As one of Aurell's villagers might have said of his writing: 'Var han egentligen nån märkvärdig författare? Han skrev ju bara om grannarna' (Tunström 1976: 8) (Was he really a good author? He just wrote about his neighbours). Aurell himself described some of his neighbours as very laconic, and thereby as good models for his own prose style (Andersson 1995: 252).[7]

The word 'provincial' is too often taken to connote something limited in a negative sense, something of lesser value and restricted reach. But

life in the province or region can show us something of universal value, just as life in Paris, London or New York can do. The province helps Aurell to capture a glimpse of the general human condition. He sees the entire world in his rural characters. The voices on the old highway are thereby not restricted to a particular village; they are made common, remarkably detached from a time and a place.[8]

Aurell depicts his province through the lens of modernism, and for him there was no conflict at all in using modernist techniques to depict ordinary village people. In his prose, he draws attention to these people and their circumstances, but also — at the same time — he celebrates modernist achievements in art, and shows his own ability as a modernist artist on the fringes.[9] His art is an example of a distinctive kind of rural modernism in Swedish prose writing of the 1940s.

Endnotes

[1] Letters from Aurell to Björling can be studied at Björlingsamlingen, Handskriftavdelningen, Åbo Akademis bibliotek (Abo Akademi Library), and letters from Björling to Aurell are deposited in Aurellsamlingen, Göteborgs universitetsbibliotek (Gothenburg University Library).

[2] In an 'Efterskrift' (Afterword) in his last book, *Samtal önskas med sovvagnskonduktören* (1969), Aurell looks back at some of these encounters with famous artists in the 1920s, and states that he could have written several more articles and some book about that time, but never did. Lars Andersson pays attention to some articles Aurell wrote during the 1920s, concerning for example expressionism (Andersson 1995: 86–8, 114–16).

[3] In 1946 his translation of *Der Schloss* into Swedish was published, and in the following year his translation of *Amerika* in cooperation with the poet Johannes Edfelt was published.

[4] Aurell was also influenced by the so called impressionist literature in the Nordic countries. He appreciated the Danish author Herman Bang, who learned a lot from the Norwegian Jonas Lie. Bang's aim was to show, not to tell in a detailed way. In my own book *Att röja plats för tystnaden: Tage Aurell som prosakonstnär* (Andersson 2012: 20–7), I discuss these influences in more depth.

[5] Ragnar Matsson (1970: 121) rightly asserts that in *Tybergs gård* there are a lot of actions that we can follow in detail, but they are never arranged in relation to a plot.

[6] See for example Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology* (1916).

[7] The Hemingway tradition in Swedish prose from these years represented by Thorsten Jonsson, was not important for the development of Aurell's narrative form (Andersson 1995: 128, Andersson 2012: 28).

[8] This is also the view of for example Eric O. Johannesson (2004: X) in his Introduction' to *Rose of Jericho, and other stories*.
[9] In *Att röja plats för tystnaden: Tage Aurell som prosakonstnär* (Andersson 2012), there are closer analyses of several short stories and novellas by Aurell, including the three stories in this article.

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