

Spectacles of Silence

The Queer in 1910s' Finnish Literature

TWO MEN TALK – or a man and a ghost, to be precise.

The ghost, Arkadj Petrovitsj Jemeljanoff, when still alive, was a lieutenant in the Russian army and a leader of a military mutiny that took place in Helsinki in 1906.¹ Because of the unsuccessful rebellion, the lieutenant was executed, but now in 1917, the year this play is written, his revolutionary spirit returns, revived by the Russian February Revolution. The other man, Vasja, has become a coachman, but he used to serve under Jemeljanoff.

At present, the ghost really wants some tea.²

Jemeljanoff

Listen, Vasjanka, sometimes I dream of a lovely creature who'd prepare the samovar... climb on my lap... and kiss me... (Willman 1917, 133)³

The coachman does not know how to answer, but he is clearly distressed. He suggests all kinds of possible samovar-makers: young ladies, wives of other officers, and female propagandists. Jemeljanoff is not content. The awkward situation is saved by the kettle. As the water boils, Jemeljanoff asks Vasja to prepare the tea himself.

The coachman's answer has nothing to do with the hot drink:

Vasja

If I were a woman, I would fall helplessly in love with you, Arkadj Petrovitsj. You are such a sweet boy. (Willman 1917, 133)

When I began writing a monograph on early Finnish working-class literature ten years ago (Hyttinen 2012a), nothing I had read had prepared me for meeting these men. Yet there they were, queerly awkward, in the 1917 play *In the Turmoil of Revolution*, written by Elvira Willman (1875–1925), a prominent writer of working-class fiction in her day, who has been almost entirely forgotten by later generations. I remember sitting in the Finnish National Archive and staring at these two men, not knowing what to make of them. When I discussed them with people, I was often asked whether queerness figured a lot in Finnish literature of the era.

I had no way of knowing. There is hardly any research on early 20th century Finnish literature from any queer-related perspective.

However, I could not quite articulate the nature of this research gap. These men are not characters with homosexual identities, whether open or suppressed. In order to study them as such, I would have to read quite a lot into them. In the text, there are just hints, passing remarks of these possibilities that are not possibilities.

Vasja makes a point of emphasising that he would have feelings if he were a woman. So there are no feelings now – there cannot be, because the world does not work that way. Coachmen do not climb on the laps of lieutenants. It is unthinkable.

Except that this is exactly what we are thinking: me, Vasja, and Jemeljanoff.

If there were any systematic research on homosexual figures in early 20th century Finnish literature, Jemeljanoff and Vasja would not fit. Yet a queer undercurrent is undeniably present here as a force that organises the spatial and mental distances between these characters and others in the play.

Figures such as Jemeljanoff and Vasja resonate far beyond their particular case. Focusing on the queer in fiction written during the 1910s

in Finland, brings under critical inspection the conditions for becoming a Finnish citizen during the very first decade that this becoming was possible in the full sense of the word, and on how certain versions of straightness became equated with mature, responsible citizenship. Until 1906, the Finnish parliamentary system was organised through estates and only independent men pertaining to one of the four estates could vote. All others had to rely on these men to represent their interests. The establishment of a new parliamentary legislation in 1906 turned every Finn into a representative of their nation overnight: all citizens old enough, regardless of gender or profession, could vote and run for parliament. The first modern parliament was elected in 1907, even if all real power resided in Russia for ten more years, until Finland gained independence in 1917. Literature written between these years was an important platform for reimagining citizenship and the implicit rules of performing it successfully.

Countering the Heteronormative Canon

It took years of shared journey, but I gradually began to understand why Elvira Willman chose to surround Jemeljanoff and Vasja with this queer aura (see Hyttinen 2014b). First, hinting at the revolutionary hero's desirability even in the eyes of other men was a way of marking his superiority. Such was his charisma that everyone, regardless of gender would immediately surrender to his leadership and desire his attention. Second, this same-sex attraction was necessary to hint at, and simultaneously deny, to secure a particular understanding of political agency. Elvira Willman, as radical as she was in many senses, inherited her understanding of dual, gendered citizenship from the 19th century. In Willman's fiction, men would lead revolutions and the working-class movement, whereas women would engage in politics mainly through nurturing and loving these men and seeking their approval. This configuration of political subjectivity consisting of two human components, one female and one male, would shatter would it be thinkable that the parts did not by necessity necessitate each other. However, these are just explanations for the kind of functions the queer serves in this particu-

lar literary work. How Jemeljanoff and Vasja functioned within a wider literary context, I still did not know. Why would Willman resort to the queer when constructing her hero? Was this a cultural resource easily available to her at the time? Were there many characters like Jemeljanoff and Vasja about? Would the contemporary audience have understood them as being just about on the right side of the border to the unknowable? It is impossible to know: the play was premiered in the summer 1917 (Seppälä 2010, 302–3) and played in the early 1920s to raise money for the Socialist Workers' Party (Seppälä 2010, 152), as well, but never is the ambivalent relationship of the central characters discussed on these occasions, at least not in press.

The desire to understand where Jemeljanoff and Vasja would be located within a larger literary context, gave rise to my current research project. In this project, I read all prose listed in the Finnish national bibliography between the years 1907 and 1917 in alphabetical order, tracing the ways the queer figures, and gets configured in the fictional prose of the era. This article investigates a particular trope recurrent in the corpus, that of making a spectacle out of there being limits to the stories that can be told,⁴ and those limits having to do with sexuality and normalcy. Both written in 1912, Eino Leino's novel *Rahan orja* [*The Slave for Money*] and Selma Anttila's short story "Pyörteessä" ["In a Whirlpool"] hint at desire between women just enough to highlight the fact that this is a desire without a story. In Leino's novel, a man glimpses his wife in an embrace with another woman and he storms off to reimagine the sight and to place himself as its centre. In Anttila's story, two readings are possible. Either it is a story about desire between women where the ending is left open and in its place another story, a hetero-melodrama, begins or, it is a straight melodrama, troubled by surplus queer plot twists leading nowhere, just disturbing the pace of the narrative.

My corpus consists of 493⁵ novels, novelettes, and collections of short stories. The texts discussed in this article are representative of the corpus in that Eino Leino (1878–1926) is one of the most canonised authors in the whole of Finnish literary history, whereas Selma Anttila

(1867–1942) is a much different case. A less-celebrated writer even in her lifetime, Anttila is now almost entirely forgotten. Tracing the queer side of the Finnish 1910s is equal parts about reinterpreting those works that history has chosen to remember and about rediscovering the works, it has chosen not to.

Methodologically, this undertaking is not entirely different from the early feminist rewritings of literary history, which, to quote Elaine Showalter's (1977, vii) famous phrasing, sought to fill in the terrain between the literary landmarks of "the Austen peaks, the Brontë cliffs, the Eliot range and the Woolf hills." However, in feminist conversations undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s, it was a fairly straightforward task to define what was missing: it was all those woman authors, overlooked by literary histories, whose absence made each woman writer who made it to the history books seem exceptional. In my case, the key term is a lot more ambiguous: the queer. I want to challenge the heteronormative understanding of the Finnish literary history, chart the terrain between the landmarks of straight man's *Bildung*, the romance, and the family sagas, but what can I hope to find in their shadows?

The "queer" here is not shorthand for gay, lesbian, bi, trans, and intersexual identities, and my project is not about trying to find either writers or literary figures that could be identified as such. Rather, I understand the "queer" in a poststructuralist vein as the constitutive outside of the normative, as, "the excess of something always unassimilable that troubles the relentlessly totalizing impulse informing normativity," to quote Lee Edelman (in Dinshaw et al. 2007, 189). Reading literary characters with certain identities might be a part of a process of analysing how this excess functions, but it is not only about that. This is a crucial distinction for me.

Granted, even this approach cannot do without identity when defining the research object. However, the identity at play here is not a presumed identity behind a literary representation, rather the project depends on the identifiability of the queer paradigm today and our being able to identify as researchers with queer interests. This is a genealogical project, which Claudia Lindén (2012) so elegantly defined a few years ago:

Asking the queer question is possible precisely because we are products of the very discourse that has created the homo-/heterosexual dichotomy. If we do not look for the origin but the genealogy of the heteronormativity that eventually produced even queer theory, we have the possibility to find a simultaneously destructive and constructive way of relating to our tradition. Through meeting the tradition with a critical question we can hope to make visible those other interpretations and meanings that until now have been unthinkable. (Lindén 2012, 93–4, translated by the author)⁶

I hail with joy and excitement the recent Swedish research on the lesbian in Swedish literary history (Borgström 2008; 2016; Björklund 2014). My own focus, at least for the moment, lies, however, elsewhere. My main interest is in trying to lure the heteronormative order of the 1910s to, so to say, testify on behalf of its own volatility, to make it admit how dependent it is on its queer others in order to exist at all. I am aware of the risks I am running here, rendering the queer sequential (Jagose 2002) or as the forever-versatile counterpart of the normative (e.g. Colebrook 2014). The thing is, even if the emergence of heterosexuality and homosexuality were simultaneous, it is the straight order that won the hegemony. Consequently, the straight story is what I already know and the one constantly reinforced in different curricula and institutional practices. What I do not know is the queer part. The poststructuralist paradigm allows me to leave the central term fruitfully open. The queer side of the story shall emerge from the corpus because of the research process.

Therefore, even though my large corpus seemingly promises scientific accuracy,⁷ my key term leaves the whole project fundamentally precarious and vulnerable. What gets analysed in the project are, in the end, those texts and moments that speak to my queer sensibilities, however reflexive I wish them to be. Quite often, such texts touch upon, in one way or another, same-sex attraction. According to Jagose (2002), the history of male same-sex desire is characterised by prohibitions, whereas desire between women has been presumed as non-existent. That I in-

clude examples of both in my corpus does not signal indifference on my part to the very different socio-historical locations the subjects marked by these categories were, and are, able to assume. Rather, my reason for doing this is that, as Jagose (2002, 4) writes, “however differently structured, the forbidden and the unthinkable are both effects of productive prohibitions. They are different tropes for securing a reinforced sense of the licit and the allowable.”

Embrace without a Story

In Leino’s *The Slave for Money* (1912) two women kiss and caress each other in a surprisingly sensual way. Even straight displays of affection are rarely depicted with such intensity in the era’s literature. However, in reading the novel, one learns hardly anything about the women and their feelings for each other. Rather, the invoking of the possibility of same-sex desire or affection here serves to highlight the lack of narrative thereof.⁸ In this way, the scene is an example of how the spectacle of silence-trope functions: it makes us alert to the fact that there may be all kinds of things going on outside of our field of vision we know nothing about. It does not illustrate the outside, just makes us queerly aware that an outside might exist.

In the novel, Johannes Tamminen, a former member of the first Finnish Parliament, has travelled to Paris with his wife Irene. Irene’s cousin Signe travels along with them. After an evening of drinking, dining, and disagreeing, Johannes enters his wife’s chamber. He witnesses a scene that leaves him perplexed:

He had opened the door leading to the next room.

And had seen in the mirror how Signe was undressing his wife, just as Johannes himself had done the previous afternoon. And how Signe kissed her throat and how Irene pressed her hand firmly on her own naked, sweet bosom.

And on both their faces there was an expression of such enjoyment and bliss that Johannes could still not forget it. (Leino 1912, 122)

The text uses a configuration made popular already by the late 19th century realist literature: a scene in which a man looks, preferably through a mirror, at a woman who is unaware of being watched (Cohen and Prendergast 1995; Lappalainen 1998, 82–3; Hyttinen 2012b, 216–7; 2014a, 40). In Leino's novel, the man is, as mentioned, a former member of the Parliament, and is thus by definition not only eligible, but also elected as a representative of the Finnish nation. The women he is looking at are his wife and her cousin; until 1907, these women's political agency would have been entirely dependent on him, as the estate system only recognised men as political subjects – and only men with the right kind of income and social status. The scene of gazing is about control and power, as well as gender and sexuality: it is men who do the watching and, thus, the gaze is associated with a masculine use of power, producing a subject who reigns over its environment by looking, and through looking, knowing it. The women are subjected to the gaze, becoming objects rather than agents in the scene. However, in Leino's novel, the man cannot control the situation. The women escape his attempts at reigning through objectification, as they are engaged in an economy of desire indifferent to his gaze (Hyttinen 2012b, 216–7; 2014a, 40). This is a shock the man cannot handle, and most of the narrative after this scene is about the man trying to deny the scene he had witnessed.

Denying the importance of the sight begins immediately after Johannes leaves the hotel. His first step is to not acknowledge that his wife could have had any real agency in the embrace:

To think that his wife had such instincts! He would never have guessed.
Or maybe it was not his wife, maybe it was Signe? That unmarried, pale
upper-class daughter, too proud to surrender to a man?
That felt like a natural explanation to him. (Leino 1912, 123)

A scene of drinking and dancing with another woman follows, but the next day, the man returns, prepared to forgive his wife, only to discover she has checked out of their hotel lodgings, leaving no address behind. I have read the text with my students several times, and their observations

seem to conform mine: it is almost impossible to realise that we, as readers, receive only the same brief a glimpse of the women that Johannes does. This is because the narrator, even if it is a third person one, is closely focalising the narrated phenomena through Johannes' vantage point. He sees the women and dashes off. The narrator, and thus the reader, follows at his heels. Once back at the scene, and witnessing the empty room, Johannes starts fabricating a story of what has happened. The narrator reports his vivid musings without interference; therefore, we are easily lured into thinking we are still witnessing the women, even if in reality we are only witnessing what goes on in Johannes' head.

They had first, of course, fallen silent, until they heard his footsteps distancing. Then they had looked each other in the eyes, very serious. [–]

“What do you think will come out of this?” Signe had whispered. “He left angry.”

“Hmph!” Irene must have answered. “Surely two cousins have the right to like each other a bit.”

“Your husband is so weird,” Signe had countered forgivingly. “I’m almost afraid he is jealous because of me.”

And Irene had answered with a content smile:

“What to do? He loves me so fiercely.” (Leino 1912, 141–2)

It is significant that the narrator does not grant us access to the room with the two women and let us know what really happens. Their reality remains unknown to us. We only get a glimpse of it, the same glimpse as Johannes Tamminen. What we are given, instead, is Johannes' speculation of the events that might have taken place after he had left. The narration in the passage above is rendered in past-perfect tense and consists entirely of things he imagines, even though as a reader, one might miss this technique entirely and believe, like Johannes, that he or she actually knows what had happened in the women's room (Hyttinen 2012b, 218).

Thus, not capable of giving up his belief that his is the only version of reality that exists, Johannes articulates the queer sight into a narrative that further secures his status as the privileged subject-knower of the

world. He imagines a beginning: his wife must have been upset because of their earlier disagreement. The cousin must have wanted to comfort her. In addition, there may have been a desire to get back at him, to trigger jealousy. Then there is the scene he saw, followed by the discussion he imagines, in which the wife expresses her deep worries about what the man might think, having caught them. The novel dramatises the way normativity works: it refuses to acknowledge it has an outside. Even faced with an entirely different economy of desire, the protagonist of normalcy here shows no curiosity either towards the outside or towards the way that this meeting questions the limits of normativity.

Leino's story makes a spectacle of excluding the queer. It makes audible the silence that in most cases is so difficult to verify. In that sense, it is both a window and a mirror. The novel illustrates the process of not acknowledging difference, of shutting it out in order for a straight story to emerge.

Straight Melodrama and a Disturbing Friendship

My second example of the spectacle of silence-trope is a short story "Pyörteessä" ["In a Whirlpool"] from a collection of short stories called *Ristiriitoja* [*Dissonances*] (1912) by Selma Anttila. Anttila made her debut in 1904 with a collection of short stories *Kuvia työväen kaupungista* [*Pictures from the Worker's City*], and worked as a librarian and a teacher. In the story analysed here, she depicts a teacher and a Salvation Army officer.

If Jemeljanoff and Vasja's desire for one another was unthinkable, this short story is included to discuss another way for securing the limit of the allowable: illegibility of the queer. I shall first outline the story's main events, then move on to discuss three aspects I find of particular interest from a queer critical perspective: the two plotlines of the story (one centring around the narrator and her woman friend, the other around the friend and her husband), my own desire, as a reader, for a closure that is not provided, and the different consequences that follow from naming the hinted at same-sex desire in the story as lesbian or as queer.

The short story's two plotlines are rendered through the same first-person narrator. In the initial pages, the narrator, a teacher, and her

friend, Helga Horros, a Salvation Army officer, are returning to the countryside from the capital, Helsinki. They sit uncomfortably in a train, surrounded by cheerful Salvation Army officers singing and relaxing in a noisy state of post-meeting bliss. The narrator muses:

I was really here only because of my friend Helga Horros. Or, I did not really have the right to call her a friend as we had only known each other for a few weeks, but we enjoyed each other's company and exchanging of thoughts. (Anttila 1912, 75)

Helga seems distressed about the noise around them, which pleases the narrator. "Of that I was thankful, and we squeezed each other's hands." (78)

After the pressing of hands, the narrator describes her friend's appearance: her bony demeanour "calls forth respectful tenderness" and "there was something about her that drew one towards her, like in a riddle one thinks one will solve soon enough but fails anyway." These observations are cut off as Helga starts talking and reveals that she will be moving to Helsinki, the narrator's home city, the next week. She will start working in a kindergarten (78).

Their next meeting is in Helsinki. The narrator goes to see Helga at her place of employment and understands that Helga is not comfortable working with small children. They take a walk and Helga explains that work is her way of trying to ignore her petty personal needs and submit to God's service. She used to be married to a man who kept secrets from her and was prone to violent fits if she as much as tried to take the newspaper from him at a wrong moment. In the end, she ran away, but she misses him all the same. The story ends with her describing the restlessness and agony she tries to escape through taking care of the sick and the poor:

I believe in God within me, but I am a confused human being. I hunger for another human being. I would once like to feel what it is like for a human to believe in another human being. (Anttila 1912, 91)

Then they meet a demented, sick man on the street and invite him to a Salvation Army meeting. He will later turn out to be an important figure from the point of view of the story's melodramatic plotline.

Then a new chapter begins with these words: "We have grown very close. She comes to my place when I return from school. We don't talk much; we just rest in each other's company in silence." (97) On one such occasion, the women gaze at wood burning in the stove. Helga compares the energy transforming into heat to the soul:

It belongs to a greater power; it has fulfilled its temporary task and is being released into freedom, maybe even back to its origins. It will have lived for a moment as an individual, have been good to us, warmed us. I am afraid that when my life finally burns out, it will never really have warmed anybody, for I have never really burned! (Anttila 1912, 98)

Helga leaves agitated. A week goes by and she does not return. The narrator goes to look for her at the kindergarten and learns she has resigned. Time goes by with no word from her, until one evening:

I saw her round hat in the door window, forgot all dissonance, and embraced her.

"Now what is this?"

"It's us being tested," she said in a serious manner.

"Don't speak in riddles."

"Oh, but you see nothing. Did you not understand that the Army did not tolerate our spending time together? You might, for heaven's sake, turn me into an Atheist, separate me from the Army. I had to move away, face the humiliation. Here I am now. I am no longer a Captain... do you understand what I am saying?" (Anttila 1912, 99)

What happens next makes a present-day reader anticipate some kind of queer closure to the story we have been following. Helga tells her friend how many tears she had shed when departing from the children and her friends at work. The narrator retorts: "I seem to remember you

complaining about never having really burned, but you must have really been in flames if it took so much water to cool it down.” (100) Then, she softens and suggests that Helga should adopt her favourite child from the kindergarten, a boy who had just lost his mother.

“Listen, bring the boy here! I’ll own you and the boy with a full tyranny and rejoice the Army’s loss.”

“Oh, calm down. I’ve already rented a place.”

“You have?”

“Yes, I’ll start a boarding house.”

“You should’ve talked about this with me.”

“You’re an old school mistress, you wouldn’t understand.” (Anttila 1912, 100)

Here could have been a closure. Helga could have accepted her friend’s invitation. On the other hand, she could have declined and somehow openly repudiated her friend’s invitation to a shared life. Instead, another storyline begins, and their story never gets its closure. As the scene unfolds, we learn that Helga is now back with her husband. Later on, we discover that his secret past involved a fraud he had perpetrated that left another man penniless. As it happens, the victim is the very same beggar Helga and the narrator had brought to the Salvation Army service. Helga sees it as her responsibility to take care of the man, whose health is declining, until his death. Haunted by guilt, Helga’s husband shoots himself.

So, a lot of dramatic turns. But what to make of it all? How to understand what goes on in the story?

Is it a melodrama about a woman married to a wicked man who eventually shoots himself? All events in the short story could be placed on this continuum, except for the depictions of certain details: the women holding hands, Helga’s resignation from the army because of her closeness to the narrator, and the narrator’s sudden suggestion that her friend and the child should move in with her. These events are not necessary from the point of view of the straight melodrama. Even if they add to

it peculiar, interesting twists, they also work against the melodramatic plotline, drawing the reader's focus to things not at all related to this essentially heteronormative plot structure.

Or, are there two separate plotlines here: one depicting two women attracted to each other, whose story is interrupted with a peculiar silence precisely where we would desire to have explanations, rendering the storyline without closure; and the other, a straight melodrama that begins at the moment we are expecting an ending to the women's story?

I take that back. There is no general we here. It is I desiring the ending, but I am not unique in my desire. According to Jagose (2002, 2–3), it is a typical gesture of lesbian studies to resort to history in a desire to give lesbianism visibility. If we knew more – had the narrator even once named what she feels towards her friend, had either of them elaborated on why the Army wanted Helga to stop seeing the narrator – we would have proper grounds for calling the story a lesbian story. If this plotline had closure, it would affirm the existence of same-sex desire here. However, there are neither explanation nor affirmation. This desire to find visibility also explains why I find myself paying so much attention to the fact there is so much lacking, so much that could be told about the two characters that is not said. Nevertheless, as Jagose (2002) also points out, this yearning for visibility is anachronistic. If silence, illegibility, and invisibility are the central tropes through which lesbianism has been constructed, then they are all we can hope to find. There is no truer, more complete story behind these shattered remarks: they are the story.

On these grounds, Anttila's short story could be placed on the continuum of depictions of lesbianism in Finnish literature. However, it is remarkable how little the story makes use of the discourses of same-sex desire between women available at the time of the story's writing, for knowledge-production on homosexuality had already begun in Finland. When the Finnish criminal law was revised in 1894, the laws prohibiting sodomy did not talk about same-sex sexual acts between men only, but they also acknowledged the possibility of such acts between women (Sorainen 1999, 67). Furthermore, the Finnish press had closely followed the 1895 Oscar Wilde trials in England, which made

the decadent-dandy a recognisable figure here as well (Sorainen 2006, 67–70). This can be seen in, amongst others, Elvira Willman's 1907 play *Kellarikerroksessa* [*Below the Street Level*], where a central upper-class character seduces working-class men (Hytinen 2014b). Also, Aino Malmberg's (1865–1933) short story "Ystävyystä" ["Friendship"]⁹ from the collection *Totta ja leikkiä* [*Truth and Play*], published in 1903, depicts a female couple of whom one is older, brusque and masculine, the other younger and feminine, with a tendency to pick flowers. From our vantage point, it is quite easy to see them as fitting the idea of an invert and a seductee.¹⁰ Selma Anttila's short story does not really make use of any of these available resources. Rather, it, too, can be read as varying the spectacle of silence-trope as it dramatises the lack of language for desire outside the heterosexual melodramatic plotline.

Calling the short story a lesbian story bears high risks of teleology. What is knowable and legible now can be used to fill in the gaps in the narration. However, in so doing, our attention is actually slipping away from the short story to something else, something extra-textual about which we decide the text keeps silent. As in the case of Jemeljanoff and Vasja and their possible homosexuality, we would have to read quite a lot into this story to see it as a story about lesbian figures, even if the text does offer more grounds for this kind of reading than Willman's play. If the gaps are not filled, what we are left with is a hetero-melodrama framed with a story of a queerly close friendship between two women. The depiction of their relationship is incomplete and emphasising its intimacy has no real purpose from the melodrama's point of view. Still the depiction is there, unassimilable, queerly redundant, troubling the pace of the narrative.

Conclusion

In this article, I have analysed a trope recurrent in my nearly 500-title corpus of Finnish literature published between the years 1907 and 1917: that of making a spectacle out of there being limits to the stories that can be told, and argued that those limits have to do with sexuality and normalcy. These textual moments I have called *spectacles of silence*, as they make tan-

gible a discursive mechanism often challenging to verify – it is difficult to prove that a silence is a silence and not just the absence of something. The trope is interesting because of how the texts through which it is studied here are chronologically located with regards to certain landmark events in the Finnish political history: the founding of the Finnish modern parliamentary system in 1907 and the gaining of independence in 1917.

If a nation is an imagined community, as Benedict Anderson (2006) has suggested, it is important to ask what we imagine that our fellow citizens are like. The rules for imagining citizenship are mostly implicit: we do not see them as rules as our whole existence as legible subjects relies on them. However, in the texts studied here, it suddenly becomes obvious that those rules exist, that there are borders that should not be crossed. Through analysing the spectacles of silence at play in Elvira Willman's drama *In the Turmoil of Revolution* (1917), Eino Leino's novel *The Slave for Money* (1912), and Selma Anttila's short story "In a Whirlpool" (1912), I have sought to make tangible the process through which the queer has to be simultaneously invoked and denied in order for the right kind of *we* to emerge. The queer in these stories resides precisely in the tension between what gets narrated and how we are made aware of what is left outside the narrative.

To ask how the queer figures and gets configured in literature is not the same as asking whether or not real-life gays, lesbians, or other non-heterosexual people existed in the era. Literature cannot answer that. Literature can only testify as to the limits of the legible and the rules of the imaginable. Even then, it may have to be lured. Granted, fiction may have consequences on how we understand liveable subjectivities in the real world, but it is not the same as saying literature represents extra-literary figures whose features determine their portrayal. The writers studied here may not have been aware of recording the existence of the borders of normalcy. Or maybe they were – that we might never know. What is relevant is that, consciously or unconsciously, they left us material through which, with the help of contemporary theoretical framework, we can try and make sense of the rules determining the limits of what kind of stories could be told a hundred years ago.

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NOTES

1. The character in the play is named after a real historical figure, Arkady Emelyanov, who took part in the events in Viapori in 1906, and was executed as one of the leaders of the rebellion. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sveaborg_rebellion.
2. I have discussed Jemeljanoff and Vasja in my PhD dissertation (Hyttinen 2012a), and further developed my analysis of them and other the queer features of Elvira Willman's oeuvre in Hyttinen (2015).
3. All citations in this article from Finnish fiction from the 1910s are translated by the author.
4. Judith Butler (1997, 130) would probably call these limits implicit censorship: "implicit operations of power [that] rule out in unspoken ways what will remain unspeakable. In such cases, no explicit regulation is needed in which to articulate this constraint. The operation of implicit and powerful forms of censorship suggests that the power of the censor is not exhausted by explicit state policy or regulation. Such implicit forms of censorship may be, in fact, more efficacious than explicit forms in enforcing a limit on speakability."
5. To create the list of titles, I first made a search in the Finnish national bibliography, the Fennica database, using the UDK code 894.541-3, and a time framing of 1907–1917, resulting in a list of 829 titles. I then manually gone through the list, removing duplicates, second editions, translations, children's books, and leaflets of less than 30 pages.
6. Den queera frågan är möjlig att ställa just för att vi är produkter av den diskurs som skapat dikotomin homo-/heterosexuell. Genom att söka inte ett ursprung, utan just härkomsten av den heteronormativitet som till sist producerat också queerteorin, kan vi förhålla oss till vår tradition med ett på samma gång destruktivt och konstruktivt tänkande. Genom att möta traditionen med en kritisk fråga kan vi hoppas synliggöra de andra tolkningar och möjligheter som förblivit otänkbara.
7. Large corpuses such as mine are nowadays often associated with methods of distant reading, theorised especially by Franco Moretti. According to Moretti (2005, 4), distant reading is not about presenting a string of close readings. Rather, the patterns that emerge when looking at a set of texts from afar might produce a very different kind of knowledge than from close readings. Distant reading practices relay on a scholar's ability to identify in a text a set of formal features to which the distant reading anchors itself, "since a series must be composed of homogeneous objects, a morphological category is needed" (Moretti 2005, 25). In this sense, distant reading is also surface reading. Even if I, too, reach beyond individual cases through quantity, it is here that my project is at odds with the principles of distant reading. There is no formal or morphological feature that could be claimed

as always signalling the queer. Thus, my project relies, in the end, on symptomatic readings that seek to go beyond a text's surface and bring forth the ideological contradictions within.

8. This section is based on analyses of Leino's text published in two Finnish-language articles, Hyttinen (2012b; 2014a).
9. This short story was rediscovered in 2000 and it was pointed out (Mustola 2000) that even in the European context, its depiction of a female couple was rare and exceptional. Even when the short story was celebrated, its exceptionality was thus emphasised, and no other examples of queer in such early Finnish literature have been known. Kati Mustola (1996, 78–85) has published significant pioneering research locating early lesbian characters in older Finnish literature, but apart from Malmberg, her examples are mostly gathered from the 1920s onwards.
10. As theorised by Havelock Ellis, being an invert was regarded as a pathological condition: an invert did not choose to be an invert, but had rather been born with an inverted sexual desire. However, inverts could seduce anyone to take part in their perverted lifestyle, and, therefore, even if the queerness in inverts was irreversible, their behaviour had to be regulated in order to save healthy persons around them (Jagose 2002, 25–30; Kekki 2003, 26–8).

SAMMANFATTNING

Artikeln diskuterar en återkommande trop i 1910-talets finländska skönlitteratur som synliggör å ena sidan det begripligas och det normalas gränser, och deras queera utsida å den andra, den som gör ett spektakel av att det finns gränser för vilka historier som kan berättas. I artikeln kallas variationer på tropen för *tystnadens spektakel*. Sådana spektakel presenteras i tre olika texter, en pjäs av arbetarklassförfattaren Elvira Willman från 1917, en roman av den högt ansedda kanonförfattaren Eino Leino från 1912, och en novell av den idag nästan helt bortglömda författaren Selma Anttila, också från 1912. Det framhålls att tropen *tystnadens spektakel* verkar genom att den gör oss medvetna om det kan ske en mängd saker utanför vårt synfält som vi inte vet något om. Den belyser inte utsidan, den gör oss bara queert medvetna om att det kan finnas en utsida.

Artikeln hävdar vidare att det är viktigt att betrakta finländsk 1910-talslitteratur ur ett queert perspektiv, eftersom många föreställningar om finländskt medborgarskap skapades under detta decennium. År 1906 gjorde lantdagsordningen från den ena dagen till den andra samtliga finländare till

representanter för sitt land och samtliga medborgare blev röstberättigade och valbara till folkrepresentationen, oavsett kön eller yrke. Den första moderna folkrepresentationen valdes 1907, även om Ryssland fortfarande behöll all faktisk makt i ytterligare tio år tills Finland blev självständigt 1917. Skönlitteratur skriven under dessa år utgjorde en viktig plattform för att begrippliggöra medborgarskap och de outtalade regler som gällde för att kunna framföra detta medborgarskap på ett framgångsrikt sätt. Därigenom kan den tidens litteratur också hjälpa oss att spåra de mekanismer som har fått oss att jämföra vissa versioner av heterosexualitet med moget, ansvarsfullt medborgarskap.

Keywords: Finland, queer, fiction, 1910s, Eino Leino, Selma Anttila, Elvira Willman, spectacle of silence