

Lydia Kokkola

## Lonely Landscapes

### Desire and Direction in the Writing of Anna-Liisa Haakana

*Abstract: Anna-Liisa Haakana is a Finnish novelist best known for her realistic stories set in Sápmi (better known in English by its colonial name “Lapland”) during the 1980s. Haakana’s teenage protagonists, Ykä in Ykä Yksinäinen (Ykä the Lonely, 1980) and Anitra in Ykköstyttö (Number One Girl, 1981), feel lonely and isolated despite being surrounded by their families. Loneliness, as Fay Alberti reminds us, is a social and cultural phenomenon which has its own history. In Haakana’s pre-internet novels, loneliness is mapped onto the northern landscape such that the protagonists’ perceptions of their homes are tinged with feelings of isolation. In this article, I investigate the links between the feelings of loneliness and landscape by drawing on Sara Ahmed’s work on queer orientations to examine the geo-spatial dimensions of loneliness. Although neither of the novels by Haakana examined here are romances per se, desire acts as a form of way-finding for both Ykä and Anitra. For both teens, feelings of love combined with the desire to care for someone vulnerable orient them towards their homes. To do so, they must move: stillness leads to feelings of loneliness and topophobia, but movement leads to feelings of purpose and topophilia.*

**Keywords:** Finnish YA fiction, loneliness, Anna-Liisa Haakana, way-finding, queer theory, topophilia, topophobia

Solitude and loneliness are two terms for describing the material condition of being alone, but describe utterly different experiences. While “solitude” situates the person as enjoying the interiority of their own mind, “loneliness” situates the person as desiring the company of others, often accompanied by the desire to flee their own company. The distinction is a matter of choice and mindset. The difference is evident physiologically, mentally, and socially. While solitude lowers stress levels, allowing the person time to reflect, to be more creative, and generally improves wellbeing (Nguyen, Ryan, and Deci), loneliness has been identified as a key factor in mental and physical health problems. Loneliness in young people reduces resilience, leaving the person feeling stressed in a way that can lead to long-term problems including clinical depression (Ebesutani et al.). This is partly because it is typically experienced as being intensely personal. Loneliness may also be experienced as something shameful, as though it were an indication of being unlikeable. Loneliness is also distinct from isolation: people who feel “lonely in a crowd” may well find solitude and physical isolation energizing. Nevertheless, physical isolation generates conditions in which loneliness is more likely. Young people living in sparsely populated regions must cope with isolation in a way that differs from their urban peers, especially during the pre-internet era.

Loneliness, as Fay Alberti reminds us, is a social and cultural phenomenon which has its own history. In this article, I propose that loneliness is also a *geographical* and *embodied* phenomenon. While the field of human geography has expanded exponentially in recent decades, work that connects feelings and spaces has tended to focus on simple classifications such as love of landscape – *topophilia* – and fear or hatred of a landscape – *topophobia*. Michel de Certeau introduced the notion of *spatial practice* (115), in which he drew attention to the making of desire paths, routes by which people use urban spaces that were never planned by those who designed the city (93). Within feminist philosophy, Sara Ahmed has extended this to examine desire as a means of way-finding. However, to date, there have been few studies that examine the spatial practices of desire in relation to fiction and, to the best of my knowledge, none that connect this to loneliness. In this article, I examine loneliness in the pre-internet world of Finnish Sápmi as portrayed in two novels by Anna-Liisa Haakana. The aim of the discussion is to examine when and how loneliness surfaces in Haakana’s novels, and I identify *movement* as the key element in mitigating its negative impact. I begin by introducing Haakana’s work and the key concepts used

to examine loneliness in the novels. I then contrast moments in the novels when the protagonists are engulfed by loneliness with moments when they feel at home.

## Haakana's Fictional World

Anna-Liisa Haakana is an award-winning Finnish novelist who is best known for her realistic stories for youth set in Sápmi during the 1980s. (Sápmi is better known in English by its colonial name "Lapland", an area which spreads across the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and into Russia.) The specificity of the settings and the regional specificity of the language of her protagonists may partially explain why her works have not been translated into non-Nordic languages such as English. The translations here are my own. Her first two novels, *Porokylän porukan kesä* (The Reindeer Villagers' Summer, 1979) and *Porokylän porukan talvi* (The Reindeer Villagers' Winter, 1980), feature a group of young people. As the titles suggest, reindeer husbandry is a central element in the lives of the young people, but the novels do not foreground ethnic identity. This is also the case in Haakana's most acclaimed novel, *Ykä Yksinäinen* (Ykä the Lonely, 1980), the first of her novels to feature a solitary protagonist. It was followed by *Ykköstyttö* (Number One Girl, 1981), which does not mention Sámi traditions. In this article, I focus on *Ykä Yksinäinen* and *Ykköstyttö* partly because they are the most widely acclaimed and often appear as a paired set in school libraries (Kanto, *Pohjoisen* 29), but mainly because of the way they depict loneliness. The group of children in Haakana's first two novels are often bored, but Ykä in *Ykä Yksinäinen* and Anitra in *Ykköstyttö* feel lonely and isolated despite being surrounded by their families.

Ykä (short for "Yrjö"; "George" in English) is an only child, who gives himself the title "Ykä Yksinäinen" (Ykä the Lonely), thereby defining himself primarily in terms of his loneliness. Anitra has an elder brother, Antti, who has recently returned to their parents' home after several years away. Antti's negative experiences of life elsewhere, and his decision to return to his childhood home to continue the family business, are presented in parallel with Anitra's experience of leaving temporarily for a summer job but now being "forced" to stay home and care for her child. Both novels are set in fictionalized villages on the outskirts of a town that resembles Sodankylä. Ykä's parents are engaged in traditional Sámi practices including reindeer husbandry, fishing, and handicrafts, whereas Anitra's parents run

the village shop. As a result, Ykä spends a considerable amount of his time surrounded by nature, whereas Anitra is primarily depicted moving between built environments. Nevertheless, both novels are filled with extended passages describing the landscape, focusing in on small details such as how the plants adjust to the extreme seasonal changes. Both protagonists can read the landscape proficiently, but their readings are overlaid with feelings that relate to other facets of their lives, particularly loneliness.

Haakana's characters are not wealthy. The expansion of the tourist industry during this period is evident in *Ykä Yksinäinen*. The sighting of a tourist from the south is treated as a sign of a seasonal change. Ykä and his friend, Kassu, visit a hostel to meet teenagers from the south. They spend the evening spinning tall stories about encounters with wild animals, which keeps everyone entertained but does not form a basis for friendship. The additional income Ykä's mother earns from selling her handicrafts to tourists is not sufficient to produce material well-being (see also Kanto, "Pohjoinen voimaannuttavana"). Anitra's family appear to be wealthier than Ykä's, but she needs to travel to the fish-factories in Norway to earn money for herself during the summer. On her return, she leaves school to earn money to provide for her child. Although neither teen lacks food and shelter, lack of surplus wealth for buying desired Christmas presents, items for the baby and even paying for transport reduce the characters' happiness. In contrast, certain engagements with their physical surroundings promote feelings of well-being.

Neither of the novels by Haakana I present here are traditional romances, but desire acts as a form of way-finding for both Ykä and Anitra. In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others*, Ahmed presents desire as a form of way-finding noting how it prompts movements towards (or away from) the desired person or object. She refers to these as "homing devices" as desire leads individuals on a trajectory in search of a place where they can feel at home (8). These movements then determine who and what comes into proximity. As such, social relations are also spatial relations. Both of Haakana's teens orient themselves towards a specific person. Ykä is primarily oriented towards his friend who calls himself "Yksi Jalka" (One Leg), because he has cancer, and one leg has been amputated. The two boys are instantly attracted to one another, but there is also a subplot involving a girl from town, Seija, which serves to deflect the possibility of queer desire (as though bi- and pan-sexuality did not exist). Ykä is certainly interested in female bodies, but for reasons I shall outline below, he is not particularly interested in Seija. While

I do read the boys' mutual attraction as desire, I am less interested in their queerness than in how the feeling of desire orients Ykä towards himself and his home. Anitra has been sexually active, but is single and celibate during the novel. She becomes oriented towards the child she is carrying. I consider how Ykä's orientation towards Yksi Jalka and Anitra's orientation towards her unborn child enable them to navigate loneliness and the landscape.

### “Pinch-points” and Desire in Manifestations of Loneliness

Alberti defines loneliness as an “emotion ‘cluster’, a blend of different emotions that might range from anger, resentment, and sorrow to jealousy, shame, and self-pity” (6). Her *Biography of Loneliness: The History of an Emotion* traces the association of being alone with feelings of loneliness in relation to modernization, urbanization, and what she terms “pinch-points” in the life-trajectories of individuals, both real and fictional. Pinch-points are periods when circumstances align to make loneliness more likely, for instance, after a divorce or bereavement, in old age, and when homeless.

Viewing loneliness as a product of historical forces helps to explain how it has become so profound in the twenty-first century. There will be “pinch-points” of loneliness; those moments when the individual in the modern age will be aware that she or he is experiencing a rite of passage: adolescent love, the birth of a child, marriage, life-threatening illness or death, divorce, or any number of significant moments that can be experienced alongside others or alone. Amid a backdrop of collective change, individual lives are lived. (39)

The two novels by Haakana include several of the elements Alberti mentions. Both Ykä and Anitra experience the end of adolescent love, Anitra is preparing for the birth of her child and Ykä mourns the death of his first love interest. Alberti also notes that belief in a “soulmate” can also generate feelings of loneliness, when no such person exists (61–82). Both Ykä and Anitra experience the sensation of finding a soulmate, although both novels focus on the feelings of loss. For Ykä, this is due to the death of Yksi Jalka, for Anitra the feeling of loss is a result of discovering that her boyfriend is having sex with another girl. Adolescence is also a pinch-point in the sense that it is a transition between life-stages. Adolescents are no longer children, but nor are they fully ready for adult responsibilities. For my argument, it is also relevant to note that they do not have full freedom of movement: without a driving license, adolescents are

mostly dependent on their bodies, lifts, and public transport for movement, which is partly why loneliness can be a regional concern.

In sparsely populated regions, such as Sápmi, possibilities for meeting like-minded others differ from those in densely populated urban settings, but it is not simply a matter of how many people are around. In rural settings, greeting someone walking along the same path is “normal”, but greeting everyone in a metro carriage would be decidedly odd. Both these examples come from movement, which is the element in the geography of loneliness that I highlight. In her discussion of the fiction of Haakana, Kati Kanto examines positive feelings towards the landscape (topophilia) to suggest that the characters associate nature with their early childhood, and close connections with the parents (*Pohjoisen* 69). In contrast, experiencing the same landscape with a peer often leads to feelings of anxiety and topophobia, but she also notes that such feelings remain temporary (*Pohjoisen* 69, “Luulis” 185). In Kanto’s analyses, the landscapes are assumed to be stable, and she locates all changes within the feelings of the protagonists. In contrast, I regard the landscape as active, and identify the protagonists’ embodied movements as an expression of desire (Kokkola, “Directions”). Moving through the landscape towards (or away from) a desired person connects feelings about the landscape with feelings about the person.

### Topophobia and Topophilia

Kanto identifies the Sápmi setting as the main feature that distinguished Haakana’s writing from other problem novels of its era in Finland (“Luulis”, *Pohjoisen*). The 1980s were a period of rapid change in Finland, with considerable economic growth in areas such as telecommunications as Nokia expanded, buying up smaller companies and establishing a presence in the international stock markets. As a result “income poverty was virtually eliminated in Finland during the growth years of the ‘80s” (Lehto, Halla, and Heikkilä). This increased national economic stability contrasted with slower growth in other parts of Western Europe, that were still recovering from the oil crises of the 1970s. However, although Finland’s economic growth as a nation was considerable, the wealth generated from industrial expansion had limited impact on the lives of those living in Sápmi, which is evident in the lives of Haakana’s characters.

In Haakana’s novels, feelings are mapped onto the northern landscape. Kanto draws on the work of Yi-Fu Tuan (*Topophilia, Space and Place*) to distinguish topophilic responses from topophobic respons-

es. For Tuan, topophilia – the love of a place – comes from the human desire for stability, a sense of belonging, a home. Topophilic places are locations where a person feels whole, where their sense of self is supported. But if something happens to damage that place, the impact can also be experienced as damaging to the very sense of self (*Space and Place* 45–48, 195; Kanto, *Pohjoisen*). Kanto is primarily interested in how these feelings of topophilia and topophobia relate to identity, and she positions the setting as a passive reflector of the adolescent’s growth. For instance, she uncovers patterns of topophilia connected to sexual desire (“Luulis”), and topophobia connected to loneliness (“Pohjoinen voimaannuttavana” 73–74). She also notes that outdoor spaces are predominantly portrayed positively: “nature often serves as an affirmative space for their identity and growth” (*Pohjoisen* 3). In contrast, indoor spaces tend to be associated with topophobia. I recognize the patterns Kanto identifies but consider that the distinctions are more nuanced. Where Kanto regards the characters’ feelings towards the landscape as primarily fixed, only noting that these feelings change according to the characters’ age, I regard the characters’ feelings as fluctuating according to the actions they undertake while engaging with the landscape. The key elements I identify that Kanto overlooks are choice and desire.

The space alone does not determine the characters’ feelings. Feelings of loneliness and isolation emerge – in part – because the characters can only move independently as far as their bodies can carry them. Otherwise, they are reliant on lifts and rare bus connections. The protagonists do not feel “at home” in their respective family homes because they do not have the option of leaving. In contrast, Anitra’s brother, Antti, has made an active choice to be at home, and clearly finds contentment in working in the shop and socializing with his father. Choice – in Haakana’s novels – equates with the freedom to move through the landscape. In both novels, the possibility to make their own choices about leaving or staying contributes to the protagonists’ feelings of loneliness. Simply being alone is not problematic for either Ykä or Anitra.

### Haakana’s Lonely Landscapes

*Ykä Yksinäinen* begins with Ykä comparing his reactions to the death of his friend, Yksi Jalka, with those of his mother. While his mother weeps, Ykä finds himself unable to express his feelings in a similar manner. Ykä explains his loneliness as a consequence of living in Finnish Sápmi:

Kavereita mulla ei kyllä järin paljon ole. Mie asun Suomen Lapissa metsäseudulla kylässä jota tyhmempi ei heti kyläksi huomaa. Talot ovat hajallaan tien varrella kilometrin, kahden, jopa viiden välein. Meiltä matkaa lähimpään naapuriin tien suunnassa jos pohjoiseen mennään kilsa ja jos kaakkoon vajaat viisi.

(I don't have many mates. I live in Finnish Lapland, in a forest village you could easily miss. The houses are spread out along the road one, two or even five kilometres apart. From our house, the closest neighbour is one kilometre along the road to the north, and if you head south-east nearly five kilometres.) (Haakana, *Ykä* 6)<sup>1</sup>

However, the next few pages reveal that location alone is not the reason why he feels lonely. As a young child, Ykä did not feel lonely. He enjoyed being with his mother in the dairy, and out on fishing trips with his father. Ykä explains that he would have liked to maintain those close ties with his parents, but understood already at the age of five that he should not seek hugs and kisses from his mother or disturb the peace of the surroundings with questions during excursions with his father. The cluster of feelings associated with loneliness emerge as he learns to turn away from his parents, without a sense that such turning leads him to anything or anyone else. This lack is, in Ahmed's sense, *disorienting*, but still determines what and who come into proximity.

Ykä's home range is fairly large from a geographical perspective, although limited in terms of the people he can meet within that space. "Home range" is the term adopted by Sarah Little and Victoria Derr to refer "to the range or distance from home in which children can travel autonomously" (161). Margaret Mackey observes that the home range is also where "children can learn about and practice agency" (91). Mackey's work shows how literacy practices intertwine with the physical home range to enhance agency, often by using the imagination borne of reading to extend their sense of the world beyond the physical home range. Ykä extends his sense of self through association with the story of Saint George and the dragon, which forms a running joke throughout the novel. Ykä's ability to extend his home range typically involves combining his intimate knowledge of the landscape – much of which is gained from Sámi practices – with additional aids: boats, snow scooters, and his father's moped.

*Ykköstyttö* begins with a lengthy description of the landscape as Anitra travels with her friends from her summer job in a Norwegian fish factory to her home. It is very clear that Anitra would prefer to stay in Norway: "Minuakin itkettää jostakin syystä. Kotiin on pit-

kää matka. Pitkä ja surkea” (I also wanted to cry for some reason. The journey home would be long. Long and miserable) (Hakkana, *Ykköstyttö* 14). The Norwegian landscape is described in loving terms. She forces everyone to stop for an extended coffee break just before they turn inland towards Finland. The preparation for and description of this journey take up one and a half chapters of this nineteen-chapter novel. The sheer length of the description reflects the great distances one needs to travel within Sápmi, but also situates Anitra’s physical home as being located very far from the place where she feels “at home”.

Although readers are fully aware that Anitra is sad to leave Norway and apprehensive about returning to her parents, her reasons for feeling this way are not clear until after her arrival. Anitra explains “mie olin kiikissä” (25). Literally, this would mean that she was trapped in a wooden device used for holding the corpse of an animal whilst its fur is being removed to be cured. She describes pregnancy as very explicitly preventing her from movement.

Anitra’s child was conceived by accident, and not with her boyfriend, Maukka, whom she loves. Half-way through the novel, Anitra recalls their break-up. Maukka invited Anitra to his home during the school day to have sex. At first, Anitra is reluctant to skip her lessons, but then changes her mind and so leaves school to visit Maukka, only to find him in bed with another girl. Heartbroken by Maukka’s infidelity, Anitra flushes her contraceptives down the toilet. Later, she goes out with some friends to drown her sorrows and misses the last bus home. As a result, she stays the night with a male friend and her pregnancy results from that one-night stand. In sum, she was pregnant before she left for Norway and has returned home too late to have an abortion. Anitra’s description emphasizes the lack of mobility – compounded by a lack of money – that leads to this entrapment:

Paljon mie nyt antaisin, jos olisin silloin lähtenyt. Paljon, jos voisin pudottautua takaisin siihen hetkeen, jolloin seisottiin ahtaassa eteisessä ja todettiin, ettei taksirahaa saada kokoon, ettei kukaan pysty ajamaan autoa, että kaikki ovat väsyneitä ja haluavat nukkumaan, ettei kukaan enää jaksa miettiä, miten minun kotimatkan järjestyy.

(I would give so much now if I could have left then. So much, if I could go back to the moment when we were standing in that cramped hallway and realized that we couldn’t get enough money for a taxi, that no one could drive a car, that everyone was tired and wanted to sleep, that no one could think about how my journey home would be organized.) (37)

Note how Anitra describes the hallway as “ahdas” (cramped): the lack of physical space resembles her lack of mental freedom. The lack of money for a taxi limits her ability to move. She is physically trapped in the house, and the result is her unplanned pregnancy. In terms of orientation, Anitra’s decision to turn away from school and orient herself towards Maukka leads to a sequence of further orientations (towards drink, away from home) that result in becoming pregnant by Pete. These orientations are described in terms of unwelcoming, cramped spaces utterly unlike the open Norwegian landscape.

While Kanto observes the presence of both topophilia and topophobia, she only observes that both occur in the same character (*Pohjoisen*). She does not connect the feelings to the characters’ actions, desires or movement, although she does note that the age of the characters matters. For Kanto, the landscape simply reflects the characters’ interior world: they feel at home there as young children, but experience topophobia in adolescence (*Pohjoisen*). Drawing on Ahmed, I see a clear pattern emerging in relation to Ykä’s and Anitra’s feelings of loneliness and their forms of movement. As a result, their feelings toward the landscape can be changed by active choices. The cluster of emotions associated with loneliness emerge at points when the teens are still. In contrast, the moments when they feel at home are connected to movement. Topophilia emerges when their bodies move through the landscape, especially when they move with or towards the person they love.

### Lonely Routes through Sápmi

Ahmed notes how routes are formed from our orientations of ourselves towards or away from people and objects in our proximity. A queer orientation, she suggests, disrupts socially expected spatial relations, bringing the queer subject into proximity with objects and people that might, at first seem awry (*Queer Phenomenology*). In *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley identify a “dominant narrative” in which children are simultaneously assumed to be “innocent of sexual desires and intentions” whilst presumed to be heterosexual (ix). While their primary concern is to raise awareness of queerly sexed children, my earlier work draws on their work to suggest that adolescent desires are always deemed deviant, and thus queer (Kokkola, *Fictions* 101–104). Ykä’s (reciprocated) desire for Yksi Jalka is easily understood as homosexual, and the sub-plot involving Seija reads

as compulsory heterosexuality rather than desire. Ykä expresses a generalized interest in girls' bodies, but expresses little interest in Seija as a person. The romantic connection between the boys and the thrill of their connection contrasts sharply with the dullness and/or irritation Ykä experiences around Seija. Another point of connection between the boys lies in their beautifully understated Sámi backgrounds. Although never overtly mentioned, Ykä's other friend, Kassu, is Finnish. Ethnicity is never brought to the fore in Haakana's novels, but is an undercurrent in her protagonists' search for someone who is "like me".

Ykä's loneliness alters when his patterns of movement change due to his becoming oriented towards a specific person, Yksi Jalka. At fourteen, Ykä is too young for a driving license, but he frequently takes his father's moped and goes on day trips because "pitihän miehen muutakin nähdä kuin aitan polulla asteleva emäntä ja raolaan repsottava ovi" (a man should see more than his mother walking to the barn and a door hanging off its hinges) (Haakana, *Ykä* 11). Using the moped illegally to move through Sápmi is a direct consequence of his desire to escape his feelings of loneliness in his home. However, Ykä does not use the moped to visit people he knows, such as his friend Kassu, which implies that simply moving through the landscape supplies more of what he needs than socializing with people he knows. This orientation towards the landscape leads Ykä to Yksi Jalka. While out on the moped, Ykä stops to pee. He lifts the moped off the road into a ditch, and steps into the forest. He describes the mist, the drops of water in the trees, the moss and the scent of resin in detail: he is fully attuned to his surroundings. Amid this lovingly described landscape is Yksi Jalka, a boy who has adopted a nickname (One Leg) that emphasizes his lack of mobility. Yksi Jalka is collecting lichen for reindeer. He invites Ykä to sit with the promise that he will end up with a wet butt – which becomes another running joke. Each time the pair meet, staying still involves getting a wet butt. The sexual innuendo is probably obvious to a queer reader, but perhaps less so to a fervently heterosexual reader, who might easily be distracted by the sub-plot involving Seija.

Ykä meets Seija on a trip to a lake that is so far away they need to spend the night in a fell cabin. Ykä has promised his father that he will collect a boat, and Kassu asks to join him. However, when the two boys are supposed to meet, Ykä discovers that Kassu has invited a third friend, Petteri, Petteri's girlfriend Anja, and Anja's cousin Seija along too. Ykä's first reaction on seeing the group is the desire to "paeta paikalta juoksujalkaa" (flee as fast as my feet would

carry me) (25), but Kassu holds him still by the shoulder. Despite naming himself in terms of his overriding sense of loneliness, Ykä is disturbed by the prospect of being in a group. Alberti observes that “the recognition that one has nothing in common with others [...] is so challenging” (49–50), and the feeling of being “alone in a crowd” can be more isolating and have more impact on well-being than isolation itself.

Ykä is horrified by the idea of leading a group, more specifically a group containing a strange girl, across the wilderness to the fell cabin. His fears turn out to be well-founded, partly because the other boys have brought a bottle of spirits and get drunk when they reach their destination, but mainly because Seija steps off the path and so falls into the mire. The local kids know what to do:

– Älä saatara polje, kuulin Kassun karjuvan kiukkusesti. – Se imee kahta lujemmin, jos poljet. Ole paikallasi, ota jostakin puskasta kii.

(“Don’t kick your legs, for fuck’s sake”, I hear Kassu roar angrily. “It will suck you in twice as fast if you struggle. Stay where you are, grab a bush or something.”) (Hakkana, *Ykä* 27)

The teenagers drag Seija out of the mire, and seat her beside a fire to warm up. At this point, Ykä discovers that he is the only person to have brought a change of warm clothes on the trip. (Seija only has pyjamas suitable for use in town with her.) Ykä is the only person who knows how to manage in the terrain. It is Ykä who takes care of Seija, who knows how to navigate through the landscape, who can produce fires, and prepare food and coffee in the cabin. He can also handle boats well, fish and later he is shown to be competent when driving a snowmobile and herding reindeer. Outdoors, Ykä moves with confidence and maturity. Seija shows that such knowledge has to be learned. (Anja’s Sámi heritage is foregrounded in the novel. As her cousin, Seija must share some Sámi heritage, but she is depicted as a town girl who understands little of Sápmi.) In this group, Ykä feels more alone than ever, but most of all at the points when he is still – rescuing Seija or at the cabin. As such, it is less the landscape that produces the feelings of topophobia or topophilia, or even the presence of others within the landscape: it is the physicality of engaging with the surroundings that generates or suppresses the cluster of feelings associated with loneliness. What Ykä needs is someone to share movement with. *Yksi Jalka – One Leg* – literally names himself in terms of his inability to move, but provides the company Ykä desires.

Alberti contrasts transient loneliness with chronic loneliness, noting that the former is something everyone experiences alongside life changes such as moving home, and can function as “a spur to personal growth” whereas the latter “is not choosy; it often settles on those who have suffered enough” (xi). Yksi Jalka has clearly “suffered enough” due to his illness, but Ykä’s and Anitra’s chronic loneliness seems to be connected to their ages and their geographical location. Like Ykä, Anitra is also highly competent in many aspects of her life. She successfully holds down a summer job in the fish factory and a teachers’ assistantship in the local day-care centre. She can organize events for the children and, like Ykä, notes subtle changes in her surroundings. Anitra spends considerably less time in nature than Ykä, but her movements follow the same pattern of topophobia emerging when she is still, and topophilia when she is moving. At several key points in the novel, Anitra finds herself trapped – forced into stillness – and these otherwise unremarkable events consistently lead to further feelings of loneliness. As with the above discussed moment in the cramped hallway, these feelings of being trapped happen while other people are present. For instance, when Anitra meets up with Pete, he suggests that they go for a drive so that they can talk. Pete checks that the rumour that Anitra is pregnant is true, but then tells her he has a girlfriend. He promises to visit the baby and send money. Anitra does not blame him, she just wishes that she was the one who could leave. “Mie olisin voinut parkua sille yksinäisyyttäni, masentuneisuuttani” (I could have cried over my feelings of loneliness and depression) (Hakkana, *Ykköstyttö* 117). At this point, the car gets stuck in a snowdrift, and the pair are forced to walk a kilometre to an elderly couple’s home, who help drag the car out of the ditch and charge the battery. While she and Pete are driving Anitra feels there is hope. When her hopes that Pete will help raise their child are dashed, the car stops, and she is trapped.

Unlike Ykä, Anitra has an extended circle of friends, at least at the start of the novel. There are some tensions within the group of teenagers who go to Norway, but Anitra is portrayed as getting along well with everyone. As her pregnancy becomes more obvious, her friendships suffer. As such, *Ykköstyttö* also portrays the experience of being alone in a crowd. Anitra’s seventeenth birthday falls on a Friday, and no one in her family wishes her a happy birthday. At the day-care centre, the children take note, but she goes to bed feeling lonely. As Christmas approaches, Anitra feels increasingly anxious about having to spend more time at home, because the day-care centre where she is surrounded by children is the only place she does not feel alone. “Kotona isä ja äiti muodostivat eräänlaisen joukkueen,

jonka ulkopuolelle mie jäin” (At home, Mum and Dad formed a team, and I was left outside) (143). During the preparations for the Christmas show, Anitra and the children eat traditional Finnish rice pudding. She is one of the three who finds a lucky almond: “pureskelin sitä ja minulla oli samanlainen tunne kuin Norjasta lähtiessä, että mie en halua lähteä täältä ja kun lähden, kaikki on lopussa, ohi, päättynyt” (as I bit into it, I experienced the same feeling that I had when I left Norway, that I never want to leave here, and that when I leave, everything will end, be over, finished) (146). Her feelings of loneliness threaten to engulf her: “Hätä velloi minussa aaltoina. Hirvittävä ansassa olon tunne” (Panic washed over me in waves. A terrible feeling of being trapped) (148).

Unlike Ykä, Anitra is never alone. Her baby is always present. However, up until this point, she has only considered her pregnancy in terms of how it limits her freedom. During the Christmas show, the baby kicks for the first time, and Anitra starts to recognize “ettei tämä mikään loppu ole. Tämä on alku” (that this was not the end. This was the start) (152). That is, as she orients herself towards her baby as person, she starts to see a route forwards – a route by which she will find someone to love – and she envisages her future as a mother and a teacher. This particular revelation, unexpectedly, takes place while Anitra is still, but it is inspired by the feeling of her child moving. By orienting herself towards her child’s movements, Anitra is relieved of her feelings of being trapped and lonely.

## Celebrations of Movement

Readers never learn Yksi Jalka’s real name. He is self-defined in terms of his inability to move freely, and for most of the novel he is confined to hospital in Oulu. He and Ykä only meet a few times. These include two major celebrations: Christmas and Midsummer. When Ykä arrives at Yksi Jalka’s home on a snow-scooter, he sees Yksi Jalka watching the fir branches swaying gently in the wind, with the spare trouser leg rolled up neatly. His reaction to Ykä’s arrival “riemas-tui niin että minua nolotti” (he was so thrilled I was embarrassed) (Hakkana, *Ykä* 68). Until Ykä arrives, Yksi Jalka’s only capacity for movement is the vicarious observation of the wind in the fir trees. Readers have already learned from Ykä that the air is above freezing, and so the trees have no snow cover: “vesi pisaroi oksilta kuin itku” (waterdrops fell from the branches like tears), it is as though Yksi Jalka was tearful (68). Ykä offers him a chance to move freely.

Ykä suggests that they go off on the skidoo, build a fire and celebrate Christmas “Se katsoi minuun ja sen naama alkoi loistaa ja se nyökkäsi ihan turhan monta kerta” (He looked at me and his face lit up, he nodded more times than was necessary) (69). The boys yoik beside the fire, get wet butts and drink coffee.

- Kiitos, sanoi Yksijalkainen äkkiä mulle ja otti ihan kädestä kiinni. - Tästä tuli se mikä pitikin, joulujen joulu.  
Mulla meinas päästä parku.

(“Thank you”, One Leg said suddenly, and actually took me by the hand. “Everything was just as it should be, the best Christmas ever.” I almost burst into tears.) (70)

By midsummer, Yksi Jalka’s condition has deteriorated significantly. Nevertheless, Ykä once again offers a means by which the two can move freely: he rows Yksi Jalka upstream to give him a gift: a bank covered in marsh marigolds. They find a place to stop, make a fire and fish. This time, there are no jokes about wet butts, but Ykä connects the river water under the boat to “Tuonela”, the river that, in Finnish mythology, like the Ancient Greeks’ Styx, separates the living from the dead. The boys enjoy the peaceful solitude of the river together.

Katsottiin samaa maisemaa, katsottiin toisiamme. Se mitä me tiedettiin ei tarvinnut puheita. Se mitä me ei tiedetty, ei ollut puhuttavissa.

(We gazed at the same landscape, we gazed at each other. That which we knew needed no words. That which we didn’t know, didn’t need to be spoken about.) (128)

They are soulmates. The peace is broken by the sound of drunken voices and, on their return, Yksi Jalka’s father is waiting anxiously. The boys separate swiftly. This is the last time they meet.

The novel ends with Ykä visiting Yksi Jalka’s grave. Ykä does not feel that his friend is in the grave, but expresses a more Sámi-oriented belief that he continues to exist as part of the spirit world, able to watch over Ykä even though he remains invisible. Ykä says farewell.

Melkein heti kauhu hellitti ja mie ajattelin, että olin kyllä hullu monella tavalla, näinkin. Mie en lähtenyt siitä ennen kuin tiesin varmasti, etten enää pelkää, etten enää yhtenäksään iltana odota Yksijalkaista kamariini, en valvetilaan enkä uniin.

(Almost immediately, the sense of horror eased, and I thought about how crazy I had been. I didn't leave until I was sure I wasn't afraid that Yksi Jalka might come into my bedroom one night, not when I was awake nor when I was asleep.) (146)

As a queer reader, it is very easy to recognize the thrill-horror of fantasizing about the object of one's same-sex desire entering the bedroom, and thus why Ykä's next action can be understood as heterosexual panic. He goes into town where he bumps into Seija. They go for a coffee. There is a flirtatious element, but Ykä is mostly looking forwards to the day when he will be near someone with whom he does not feel lonely, where he can just be Ykä. Seija is not that "someone", but her company is good enough for now. This is one of the few moments when readers witness Ykä moving in an urban setting, but even here it is noticeable that he is more at home when he is in motion than when he still.

Beside the grave, however, Ykä is still: motionless in the landscape. This is the only instance in the novel when Ykä feels peaceful without motion. Ykä's desire has been directed towards Yksi Jalka, and so death produces a lack of direction. As Jamie Anderson puts it: "Grief is just love with no place to go". Coming to the grave brings Ykä peace, but not because he thinks Yksi Jalka is there. On the contrary, he emphasizes that he knows that Yksi Jalka's grave does not hold the person. Ykä has been frightened by the idea that Yksi Jalka's spirit can see him at any time, but that he will never see Yksi Jalka again. In this rare moment of stillness, Ykä redirects his desire from an orientation towards a specific person to orient himself to a spirit that is everywhere.

At the pinch-point of bereavement, which Alberti identifies as a culturally common moment of loneliness (83–117), "[b]eing lonely for just one person, rather than being generally lonely" (110) seems to help Ykä orient himself more positively to his home. Seija cannot plug the void that the death of Yksi Jalka has left, but Yksi Jalka's spirit presence everywhere means that Ykä's love can be everywhere. This is the only young adult novel I know in which the ever-present trope of death in queer narratives seems to lead somewhere.

## Concluding Remarks

Feelings of loneliness are experienced by everyone at some point in their lives, but are particularly common at pinch-points that mark a major life change. Adolescence can be understood as a pinch-point

between childhood and adulthood. The cluster of feelings associated with loneliness are unpleasant, and so spur individuals to change their situation, typically to seek out people who can alleviate the experience of loneliness. However, in the two novels by Haakana examined here, loneliness is also alleviated by being able to move through the landscape. Both Ykä and Anitra feel more settled when the ability to move through Sápmi is an option, and feel companionship when feelings of movement are connected to a person they love.

Using Ahmed's notion of desire as a means of way-finding, I have endeavoured to show how orientations to the landscape and towards a specific person are portrayed in two novels by Haakana. For Ahmed, orientation is "not only about how we 'find our way' but how we come to 'feel at home'" (7). Neither of the teens feel "at home" in their parents' houses. Nevertheless, both Ykä and Anitra experience movement as "homing devices" (8). Through the movement of their own bodies, and the experience of enabling another person's body to move, Ykä and Anitra both "learn what home means" and how to "occupy space at home and as home, when we leave home" (8). Choice - expressed as freedom of movement - is the determining factor.

Neither novel ends happily, but both end with a sense of how to navigate towards a home of their own. Ykä situates Yksi Jalka's spirit as being everywhere, and so feels that he may find a kindred spirit again. He orients himself towards people as a way to avoid the experience of loneliness. Anitra orients herself towards her own child, recognising her baby as a person with whom she can share her life, and build a home of her own. The reality that both teens must remain in their parents' homes is downplayed, and the feelings of choice and desire prevail.

*Biographical information: Lydia Kokkola is a senior lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Oulu, Finland. Her current research focuses on human-plant relations. She has published a number of articles focusing indigenous or national minority issues depicted in children's literature.*

## Notes

1 All translations are my own. Please note that Finnish uses case endings, also on proper nouns. For this reason, the names of places and people may be different in my translation from the original.

## Works Cited

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press, 2006.

Alberti, Fay. *A Biography of Loneliness: The History of an Emotion*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Anderson, Jamie. "As the Lights Wink Out..." *All My Loose Ends: Homemaking Simplified*, 25 March 2014, [web.archive.org/web/20150327161122/http://allmylooseends.com/2014/03/lights-wink/](http://web.archive.org/web/20150327161122/http://allmylooseends.com/2014/03/lights-wink/). Accessed 22 March 2024.

Bruhm, Steven, and Natasha Hurley. *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*. Minnesota University Press, 2004.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall, University of California Press, 1984.

Ebesutani, Chad, et al. "The Role of Loneliness in the Relationship between Anxiety and Depression in Clinical and School-based Youth." *Psychology in the Schools*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2015, pp. 223–234.

Haakana, Anna-Liisa. *Ykköstyttö*. WSOY, 1981.

---. *Ykä Yksinäinen*. WSOY, 1980.

Kanto, Kati. "'Luulis, että täällä assuu vain onni ja rauha ja rakkaus': Tyttöjen tilat ja paikat Anna-Liisa Haakanan nuortenromaaneissa Kukka kumminkin ja Ykköstyttö." *Sananjalka*, vol. 61, 2019, pp. 182–201, [journal.fi/sananjalka/article/view/69998](http://journal.fi/sananjalka/article/view/69998).

---. "Pohjoinen voimaannuttavana paikkana: Nuorten tila- ja paikkakokemukset Anna-Liisa Haakanan teoksissa Ykä yksinäinen ja Kehnompi Kettunen." *AVAIN-Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen aikakauslehti*, no. 2, 2017, pp. 64–77, [doi.org/10.30665/av.66202](https://doi.org/10.30665/av.66202).

---. *Pohjoisen nuorten tilat ja paikat Anna-Liisa Haakanan 1980-luvun nuortenkirjoissa*. 2022. University of Oulu, PhD dissertation.

Kokkola, Lydia. "Directions of Desire: Reading the Adolescent Body." *International Research in Children's Literature*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2023, pp. 16–29, [doi.org/10.3366/ircl.2023.0485](https://doi.org/10.3366/ircl.2023.0485).

---. *Fictions of Adolescent Carnality: Sexy Sinners and Delinquent Deviants*. John Benjamins Publishing, 2013.

Lehto, Markku, Klaus Halla, and Matti Heikkilä. *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Finland in the 1990s*. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 1999, [julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/74610/julk199925.pdf?sequence=1](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/74610/julk199925.pdf?sequence=1). Accessed 2 April 2024.

Little, Sarah, and Victoria Derr. "The Influence of Nature on a Child's Development: Connecting the Outcomes of Human Attachment and Place Attachment." *Research Handbook on Childhoodnature: Assemblages of Childhood and Nature Research*, edited by Amy Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, Karen Malone, and Elisabeth Barratt Hacking, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 151–178, [doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67286-1\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67286-1_10).

Mackey, Margaret. *Space, Place, and Children's Reading Development: Mapping the Connections*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.

Nguyen, Thuy-vy T., Richard M. Ryan, and Edward L. Deci. "Solitude as an Approach to Affective Self-regulation." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2018, pp. 92–106, [doi.org/10.1177/0146167217733073](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167217733073).

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. 1977. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

---. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974.