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Finnish Working-Class Argumentation—A Minimalist Exercise

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ABSTRACT: Finnish oral communication is often considered to be something of a minimalist exercise. A well-known expression of such communication is the so-called *Proletariat Trilogy* by the Finnish filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki. This study presents an analysis of persuasive and argumentative dialogues in the manuscript to *Shadows in Paradise*. The approach is based on Searle's speech acts, Grice's conversational maxims, and Pragma-Dialectics. The result is a description of Finnish working-class everyday rhetoric as it is portrayed in the international breakthrough film of Kaurismäki.

KEYWORDS: Aki Kaurismäki, argumentation culture, film analysis, Finnish argumentation, Finnish culture, Finnish rhetoric, pragmatic argumentation analysis, *Shadows in Paradise*, working-class argumentation.

1. INTRODUCTION TO KAURISMÄKI AND TO THE PROLETARIAT TRILOGY

Aki Kaurismäki (born 1957) is among the most noted Finnish film directors. Kaurismäki's films are mostly small Finnish non-mainstream productions in the Finnish language. Still, he has received considerable international attention, beginning with *Shadows in Paradise* (1986). In 2008 he received the highest acknowledgement within the field of art in Finland, Academician of Art—a title held for life by a maximum of eight persons at a time.

Aki Kaurismäki's filmography comprises thirty-one full-length films, the three earliest of which he directed together with his brother, Mika Kaurismäki. His first movie is *Rikos ja rangaistus—Crime and Punishment* (1983) and his latest *Valimo—The Foundry* (2006). In this article I originally intended to focus on three movies, the so-called *Proletariat Trilogy*: *Varjoja paratiisissa—Shadows in Paradise* (1986), *Ariel* (1988), and *Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö—The Match Factory Girl* (1990). These movies were produced during a very productive period during which Kaurismäki directed nine full-length films, making him the most productive and important Finnish filmmaker of the period 1986–1990. This period also marked the beginning of his international fame.

These three films depict working-class settings and characters in Helsinki, Finland. As the film-critic Peter von Bagh has commented, Kaurismäki focused on this theme during a period when no one else talked about “workers” (von Bagh 2002, p. 138). On the contrary, in Finland the eighties were dominated by the IT-boom and rapid economic growth, especially prominent in Nokia, which during this time grew to become the largest manufacturer of mobile phones in the world.

Kaurismäki himself has also characterised this series of films as a “trilogy of the meek,” adding the comment that based on the Bible one could claim that the meek will

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inherit the earth (*SKF* 10, p. 138). Most prominent in reviews about these films are comments about the realistic, or overly realistic, unpretentious, and both sad and humorous mood that together create a style that is unusual in films of this time, and a radical depart from commercially driven productions generally. Peter von Bagh describes the mood of these films as follows:

Almost the most impressive are the places, even more so than the persons. Void of all decor, the expression of the places is ruled by anonymity and insipidness, with as points of contact that which humbles, on the one hand, and that small something, almost invisible, projecting from the fundamental attitudes of the characters, on the other, on which all hope must be based. When one from this perspective watches the supermarket of *Shadows*, the prison of *Ariel*, or the home of *Match factory*, one is in the same flow of razor-sharp observations of everyday-life and trivia as the most notable artists from Kafka to Joyce have for centuries tried to achieve to portray (von Bagh 2002, pp. 141–142; transl. MH).

On closer inspection it turned out that only one of these three movies is suitable for the type of analysis I wished to undertake, that is an analysis of argumentation and persuasive verbal moves in the film. *Ariel* hardly contains any argumentative or persuasive verbal moves at all. *The Match Factory Girl*, on the other hand, is coloured by a fairytale-like atmosphere, in which “the great silence prevails” (von Bagh 2002, p. 143). Of these three, *Shadows* is the only film that depicts reality in a plausible way and in a way that can be fairly easily accessed through a pragmatic analysis. Consequently, I ended up analysing only this the first film of the trilogy. Since this is the most realistic of the three it is the most suitable one against the background of my original idea behind this article: to describe the argumentation culture of the Finnish working-class, and especially the use of persuasive moves.

The events of *Shadows* can briefly be described as follows. Nikander is a former butcher and presently a refuse collector in a waste disposal business. He asks the checkout assistant at a supermarket, Ilona, on a date, which are not very successful. Ilona loses her job and although her relationship with Nikander is uncertain she moves in at his place. When Ilona on a trip to Hanko asks what it is that Nikander really wants from her, he answers that he does not want anything. Ilona gets a new job and moves into an apartment of her own and later does not arrive at a set date with Nikander. One night Nikander is assaulted on his way home and gets hospitalised. Later Nikander decides that he, after all, does not want to live alone and goes to get Ilona for their honeymoon. Ilona has on her part had time to re-evaluate their relationship and gives in to Nikander, leaving her new job as they go on travel.

The visual language of the film is unassuming but focused. The same holds true for the dialogues and for the progression of events. In the artistic explanation of the application for production Kaurismäki defined his film as “some sort of realistic love-story” and his goal as an “in some vague way sensible roughness, the noted mother of all poetic realism” (*SKF* 10, p. 135).

Shadows in Paradise collected many awards in Finland and marked the beginning of the international breakthrough of Aki Kaurismäki: the film was presented in the Directors’ series (*Quinzaine des Réalisateurs*) at the festival in Cannes in May 1987 and it got it’s Paris premier in April 1988—in both cases followed by a favourable reception (*SKF* 10, p. 136).

2. THE APPROACH

I use linguistic pragmatics combined with analysis of persuasive argumentation. I focus on the discursive co-operation, the goals of the characters, and on the effects of their speech. I view the turns of the dialogues as speech acts. For this analysis a combination of the following theories is used to explain the speech and argumentation culture of the dialogues: John R. Searle's development of John Austin's speech act theory (Austin 1976 [1962]; Searle 1975a, 1975b); Paul Grice's principle of co-operation, conversational maxims, and conversational implicatures (Grice 1989); Searle's notion of indirect speech acts; and the Pragma-Dialectical approach to argumentation (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984).

Since my interest is argumentation and persuasion, I do not need to make detailed use of context-analysis, pause-analysis or adjacency-pair analysis. As for the context, it is a self-evident and organic part of every scene in a film and a technical description would not add much to the type of analysis I wish to undertake. As for the pauses, the manuscript of *Shadows* only occasionally marks pauses, and then only with an ellipsis. The adjacency-pairs are almost all very simple: question–answer, greeting–greeting, request–compliance/non-compliance, and so on (see Levinson 1983). In order to keep the length of the article within reasonable limits I will comment upon these aspects only when they are of a clear relevance for the argumentation or persuasiveness.

I wish to minimize the use of references and the use of technical language. I briefly explain the terminology of the methods I use when they appear the first time in the text.

I analyse the manuscript of the film and in the following “film” refers to the unpublished manuscript (Kaurismäki 1985). Since in a manuscript one cannot use or even depict all the means available in a film, the intention of the author is even clearer in the script than in the film itself. This is especially true since the script features a narrator who describes and interprets the events. The dialogues of the script do in many cases convey more verbally since in the film a part of the communication takes place through body language, glances, touches, and different visual means afforded by film such as composition and audio-landscape. Since I am interested specifically in verbal communication, the manuscript is a more suitable object for analysis than the film. The fact that the film does not to all parts follow the manuscript is here not important. The film is true to the general character of the manuscript and to its argumentation and speech culture. The conclusion from an analysis of the manuscript will hold for the film also.

The dialogues I here analyse are connected by the attempt to influence another person verbally, to try to get another person to think, to say, or to do something. From the perspective of classical rhetoric, I focus on such verbal moves that could be placed within *genus deliberativum* (i.e. speech, the purpose of which is to persuade the audience to a certain decision or action). However, the material does not give much contact surface for the categories or terminology of classical rhetoric. The verbal communication of the characters in the film is far from the disposition or ornamentation of a rhetorical speech and the techniques associated hereby.

Therefore I approach the dialogues through modern pragmatics. Especially thanks to the theories of Searle and Grice we are able to describe how the dialogues function. We can give a systematic description of the characteristics of the dialogues. A large part of these characteristics are such that we understand them intuitively, without any specific

analysis, but which are difficult to describe verbally without an appropriate methodological approach.

The film has fifty-three scenes. Of these, thirty-five scenes include spoken lines. After a general analysis, I have from these scenes chosen those that exhibit argumentation, the attempt to influence another person, and those that exhibit other interesting features of dialogue, viewed from the perspective of the Gricean principle of co-operation. There are twenty such scenes. I have numbered the spoken lines and analysed the two hundred and thirty-four turns in these twenty scenes. This equals over half of the four hundred and sixteen turns in the film and thus gives a very representative picture of the spoken material. I analyse the scenes in chronological order, which makes it easier for the reader to follow the unfolding of the plot of the film.

An overall picture of the rhetoric and argumentation of the characters in the film is created by the analyses of all the separate scenes. After each of the twenty analyses, I summarize the main points of interest—a reader in a hurry may read only the dialogues and these summaries. At the end of the article I draw together the results and present an overall picture.

Since the analysis of language is sensitive to nuances that may be lost or changed in translation, the analysis was first carried out completely in the Finnish language, based on the original Finnish manuscript. Only after the final version was complete, did I translate the whole analysis into English. In this way I made sure that my analysis was based on the Finnish text, not a translation, and that I kept a Finnish frame of mind during the analysis. I have noticed that my way of thinking changes depending on which language I engage in. There are traces of this procedure in the text. When I refer to a certain word, a number of words, or a pragmatic feature, it may be that this feature is not exactly the same in the translation. Any such inconsistencies are the result of the fact that the analysis is based on the original Finnish text.

3. TWENTY SCENES WITH ANALYSES

1. *One of the checkout assistants at the supermarket invites another checkout assistant, Ilona, to join her after work. (p. 3)*¹

01	CHECKOUT ASSISTANT:	One hour to go.
02	ILONA:	Yeah.
03	CHECKOUT ASSISTANT:	Will you join us tonight?
04	ILONA:	Sure. Why not.
05	CHECKOUT ASSISTANT:	Good. Got to go now.

Analysis: When asking someone to accompany one after work one could use an invitation, an exhortation, or a question. Of these, a question is the weakest one in the sense that it is the easiest one to decline. Line 03 of the checkout assistant is formally a question about what Ilona has already decided about her participation. Since the matter is raised here for the first time, the question is in fact an invitation. In other words, the *primary speech act* is an invitation, but it is presented through a *secondary speech act*, a

¹ The page numbers refer to the unpublished manuscript (Kaurismäki 1985). Translation from Finnish to English by the present author.

question.² To present an invitation in this manner lowers the social threshold to give a negative answer since, formally, the other party has not put forth any wish that could be unfulfilled.

Main points: An indirect way to present an invitation. The primary speech act, an invitation, is presented through a secondary speech act, a question.

2. Nikander asks Ilona out on a date (p. 11)

- 06 NIKANDER: Good evening.
 07 ILONA: I always did wonder who collects that garbage.
 08 NIKANDER: It's only me.
 09 ILONA: You haven't been to the store in a while ...
 10 NIKANDER: I'm on a diet.
 11 ILONA: Really?
 12 NIKANDER: No. Would you go out with me some night?
 13 ILONA: Why not. When?

Analysis: This situation is similar to the previous one (text 1), but here the question is about a romantic date, not just company after work. Nikander's joking about diet should probably be considered as flirtation. This is the closest we get to flirtation on his part in this film. Question 12 is not ordinary and the response not irrelevant. Therefore Nikander uses *modus conditionalis* in the Finnish original (not "lähdetsä" but "lähtisitsä"; not available in English—both translate simply as "would"), which, on the one hand, shows that it is a wish or invitation on Nikander's part and, on the other, shows politeness towards Ilona. An interesting feature of this dialogue is how directly Nikander approaches the subject. The invitation is not preceded by any kind of getting to know each other or clarification of backgrounds, interests or similar. The only background is that Ilona has noted Nikander earlier (09). Nikander simply wishes to go out with Ilona and asks if she wants to. She answers affirmatively, although not with much enthusiasm (13).

Main points: *In medias res*, but politely, Nikander asks Ilona out on a date and she agrees. No rhetoric is needed, except for a minimal joke.

3. The next evening Nikander picks Ilona up for the date; they sit in the car trying to decide where to go (p. 14)

- 14 NIKANDER: Well then, where shall we go?
 15 ILONA: You decide.
 16 NIKANDER: I've been thinking about it all day, but it's difficult.
 17 ILONA: Let's then go to wherever you would go now, if you were alone ...
 18 NIKANDER: Home.
 19 ILONA: But you asked me out.
 20 NIKANDER: All right then, but it's ...

² Searle presented the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts. In *direct speech acts* the linguistic expression plainly shows what the speaker means. In other words, the speaker says directly what he or she means. In *indirect speech acts* the speaker means more than what can be deduced from the linguistic expression; i.e. the speaker means more than he or she says. The primary speech act is the so-called *illocutionary act*, its function, and the secondary speech act is the linguistic form of the expression (Searle 1975a).

Analysis: In the conversation Nikander and Ilona throw the ball, in turn, to each other. How should we explain the indecisiveness of the discussants? Is it only Nikander's indolence or is he trying to avoid coming on to strongly? The conversation turns to the absurd when Nikander suggests that they would go home. They were going out on a date. This scene conveys to the viewers the element of uncertainty in the relationship between Nikander and Ilona.

Main points: The dialogue is characterized by the indecisiveness of the participants, which manifests itself in the throwing of a question back and forth between the discussants. This conveys to the viewer the uncertainty of their relationship.

4. The shop manager announces lay-offs to the personnel of the supermarket (p. 18)

21 SHOP MANAGER: You know that we regard you all as wonderful employees ... and therefore we would want for you yourselves to decide which three will be leaving ...

Analysis: The argument is a causal argument. Standpoint: "You may yourselves decide which three will be leaving." Argument: "We regard you all as wonderful employees." Implicit argument: "We cannot decide which wonderful employees will have to leave." Although the argumentation is understandable, the end-result is peculiar: the employees must amongst themselves decide which ones become unemployed. This tells more about the ineptitude of the management than about their consideration for their employees. A simple way for the management to solve the problem would be to let those go that have been employed for the shortest amount of time. It is unlikely that the real reason for the solution that the employees themselves have to decide would be that the management considers them to be "wonderful"—a hyperbole—but, rather, that there are shortcomings in the competence of the management (a hyperbole is a rhetoric figure, typical of which is exaggeration for effect).

The argumentation of the shop manager seems to be avoidance of the matter at hand—the decision as well as a proper handling of the matter. Proper argumentation is not needed since the shop manager holds the role of a sovereign employer in the matter. All in all the screenwriter conveys an image of the shop manager as an insecure and unfair leader.

The staff, however, submits to the decision without complaint and draw lots amongst themselves for those to be let go. Ilona loses her job.

Main points: A superficial pragmatic causal argumentation, the second argument of which contains a hyperbole. The roles of the arguers are unequal: employer–employee. The purpose of the argumentation on part of the shop manager is to avoid the matter at hand and on part of the screenwriter to convey a certain image of the shop manager and perhaps through this example to convey an image of inequities faced by employers in jobs such as this one.

5. The other refuse collector, Rahikainen, gives dating advice to Nikander (p. 22)

22 RAHIKAINEN: One more thing about style; try to be kind of cool, looking like you don't give a shit about anything or anyone, that nothing could interest

you less ... after a while people will start to think that there is something wrong with themselves ... their guilt awakens and they start to look up to you because everything seems to be all right with you ...

23 NIKANDER: With me?

Analysis: The argument is as follows. Standpoint: "Try to be kind of cool, looking like you don't give a shit about anything or anyone, that nothing could interest you less." Argument: "People will start to think that there is something wrong with themselves ... their guilt awakens and they start to look up to you because everything seems to be all right with you." Implicit argument: "One should try to be kind of cool, so that people start looking up to one."

Nikander reacts to the thought that "everything" would seem "to be all right" with him. His question, "With me?" signals that this description does not fit his own understanding of his situation. However, this is not what Rahikainen's idea is about, rather, that one outwardly can give the impression that everything is all right. According to Rahikainen, this is the correct attitude for a date. Rahikainen does not manage to convince Nikander about the value of his advice since the implicit premise would have required further explanation. In other respects, also, the elements of the argumentation do not resonate with Nikander's situation. We could say that the *material starting-points* are different by Rahikainen and by Nikander.³

Main points: The argumentation does not convince since it requires more support and since the material starting-points are too different.

6. *Although staff has been let go, the shop manager shows a new girl around (p. 23)*

24 ILONA: A niece, eh? I thought we were too many.
25 WOMAN: She's for another shop.
26 ILONA: I see. The keys are on the desk.

She does not ask why the position at the other shop was not offered to her, takes her suitcase in one hand and the bag and the LP-player in the other, and exits.

Analysis: Why does Ilona not ask why the position at the other shop was not offered to her? Morally it is wrong that a job is offered to a new employee immediately after three employees have been let go. This small dialogue tells about the unfairness in the world. There is work for the niece of the shop manager even though the staff is being reduced.

The dialogue also tells something about Ilona. The short way in which she acknowledges the answer of the woman, "I see" signals that she does not approve. Although she understands the unfairness of the situation she does not engage in a quarrel; maybe because it is not in her nature or maybe because she realises that it is of no point in the situation. She submits to the nepotism of society.

Main points: Through three short lines the screenwriter conveys a picture of the inequity of the world and of Ilona's character.

³ *Material starting-points* refer to pieces of information, knowledge, values, principles, etc. that the discussants share as they enter an argumentation (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, pp. 149–157).

7. *Ilona tries to arrange accommodation for the night and phones a friend (p. 24)*

Ilona places her things to lean against the phone booth, goes inside, and starts dialling numbers.

The apartment of Ilona's girlfriend; she is standing with the receiver in her hand, in the background we see a middle-aged man who is undressing his shirt.

27 GIRL: ... of course I would, but I have a guest and you know how cramped this is ... yeah ... I'm sorry, but I'm sure you understand ... call tomorrow, okay? ... Well, bye, and try to find something ... bye.

She puts down the receiver, looks quite guilty for a couple of seconds, but then shrugs, turns, and goes to the man.

Analysis: The contents of the girl's answer to Ilona's presumed question about whether she could stay at her place for the night is simply put "no, you can't" (through *mirror-reading*⁴ we understand what Ilona has asked). Interesting here is the way in which the girl frames her answer. Her answer shows that she tries to say "no" in such a soft way as possible, that is to say in a way that would damage their friendship the least. Therefore she first confirms that "of course" she would offer her accommodation "but" this time it is not possible.

Since the problem is the "guest," the girl can shift the responsibility on another person. The guest is the reason why Ilona cannot stay the night. However, we do get the impression that the guest is a temporary male visitor who probably will not stay for more than one night, if even for that long. Perhaps this is why the girl looks guilty—she could have helped more.

The girl's wordy way of saying "no" and her invitation to Ilona to call her tomorrow are means of softening her negative answer.

Main points: An indirect "no"-answer is given in a way that does the least amount of damage on the friendship between the discussants. This way is here wordiness, a reference to an external circumstance, an expression of regret, and a declaration that one wants to be in contact with the person asking for the favour. The respondent does not directly say "no."

8. *In a café Nikander asks Ilona out on a second date (p. 26)*

28 NIKANDER: Erm ... do you think we could meet again ... I have to get to work now.
 29 ILONA: Last time I was a bit stupid.
 30 NIKANDER: You?
 31 ILONA: Or someone ...
 32 NIKANDER: Would it be okay?
 33 ILONA: No Bingo?
 34 NIKANDER: No ... something else ... an amusement park.
 35 ILONA: Are they still around?
 36 NIKANDER: Of course. Tomorrow?
 37 ILONA: All right then.
 38 NIKANDER: Here ... at six?

⁴ *Mirror-reading* refers to the method or reconstructing sayings, opinions, etc. of a party, whose sayings, opinions, etc. are not directly available, by using the information available from sayings, opinions, etc. of any party in the discussion or argumentation.

Analysis: In a similar way as when Nikander asked Ilona on a date the first time (text 2), he politely uses *modus conditionalis* (*Fin.* ”voitaisiinkohan”; here translated with “we could”), now with a suffix (*Fin.* “-han,” which reinforces that Nikander is looking for agreement (cf. *Iso suomen kielioppi* §830). Ilona does not answer directly because their first date has left her bothered. Nikander had taken her to a Bingo and apparently Ilona had hoped for more. Nikander repeats his question (32) to which Ilona answers with a question that signals that she does not want a repeat of the previous. Nikander repeats his question a third time (36). This time he already assumes that Ilona will agree, as long as they do not go to a Bingo, so he enquires about a suitable time, “Tomorrow?” When Ilona thus has received confirmation that instead of Bingo they will visit an amusement park, she agrees to the date with an “all right then”-reply.

In the dialogue the characters stick closely to the matter and express their most important wishes, but feelings are not dealt with (29, 31). Of Nikander’s six lines, four are questions with the purpose of getting Ilona to commit to a second date. Of Ilona’s five lines, four are evasive replies. In this way we get the impression that Ilona is uncertain about the matter and that she will not agree to a date without persuasion.

Main points: Ilona evades Nikander’s suggestion of a date with comments and questions. Her evasion expresses her hesitation about going on a second date. Nikander does not resignate and gets Ilona to concede.

9. After the second date Nikander offers accommodation in his apartment (p. 28)

Nikander gets a rolled up mattress from a closet and takes it to the kitchen, returns, takes the duvet from the bed and one of the two pillows, goes back to the kitchen, returns again, and signals towards the bed. [From this we understand that Nikander offers his bed to Ilona, intending himself to sleep on the mattress in the kitchen. *MHs comment.*]

- 39 NIKANDER: Why don’t you take off your coat? You can sleep here.
 40 ILONA: No, I can’t ...
 41 NIKANDER: Why not, where are you going, then?
 42 ILONA: No, I mean, I will sleep in the kitchen.
 43 NIKANDER: I see ... that’s another matter, I don’t care. But I’ll leave early and
 awake you unnecessarily ...
 44 ILONA: I don’t mind.
 45 NIKANDER: You don’t?
 46 ILONA: No.

She gets up, takes off her coat, puts it on the back of a chair, and starts to dig in her bag.

- 47 ILONA: I have all my things at the station ... could I borrow your toothbrush?
 48 NIKANDER: I have another one ... unused. Let’s get them tomorrow.
 49 ILONA: Here?
 50 NIKANDER: Why not? Do you have another place?

Analysis: In the first dialogue (39–46) Nikander offers Ilona a place to sleep. When Ilona answers, “No, I can’t” Nikander assumes that Ilona refers to staying over although she refers to the place of sleep within the apartment. Nikander’s assumption probably reflects his insecurity about their relationship. Out of eight lines, five contain the negative “no,” which indirectly conveys a picture about a difficult situation.

In the second dialogue (47–50) Nikander, with a minimum of words, invites Ilona to stay with him longer than just for one night—practically to move in with him.

This exchange of words is a minimalist triumph. Especially telling is Nikander’s last line, which conveys some kind of irresistible logic of everyday life. Unless Ilona knows of another place, she will of course move in with Nikander. Nikander presumes quite a lot and does, for example, not take such an option into consideration that Ilona would not want to move in with him even if she does not know of any other place to go to. Implicit standpoint: “You will move in here.” Argument: “You have no other place to stay.” Implicit argument: “If you have no other place to stay, you will move in here.”

Ilona’s hesitation (49) is, however, understandable. After all, they have only been on two dates. In any case Nikander succeeds in his attempt to persuade Ilona. It seems that his success is more a result of his trying than of Ilona’s own will.

Stylistically the dialogue is not only taciturn but also halting. The lines are very short; some of them only have the length of one, two, or three words. The dialogue is lacking, for instance, all laugh or joviality, spontaneous remarks, nervous comments, etc., which would make the verbal interplay more fluent and natural—elements that usually are part of natural conversation. This aspect of the dialogue in the manuscript is preserved in the filmatisation.

Main points: Very short lines make the dialogue halting. Many negatives inform us of a difficult situation. Nikander’s argumentation is simple binary everyday-logic: unless there is a clear alternative, one chooses what one is offered.

10. *The next night Ilona returns home to Nikander. She has managed to get a new job (p. 31)*

51	ILONA:	I got a new job.
52	NIKANDER:	Already?
53	ILONA:	Yes ... through an employment agent.
54	NIKANDER:	Not bad. Where?
55	ILONA:	At a clothes shop, as a salesperson or cashier ...
56	NIKANDER:	I don’t blame you.
57	ILONA:	Well, let’s see how it goes ... I can do the dishes.
58	NIKANDER:	I won’t stop you.

Analysis: Nikander’s second line (54) begins with litotes (litotes is a rhetorical figure of understatement, often in the form where something is expressed by denying its opposite, e.g. *not bad* = *quite good*). He means “quite good” although he says “not bad.” “Not bad” is an understatement-type of way of congratulating Ilona on her new job, in the same way as Nikander’s next line, “I don’t blame you,” which here means “I congratulate you.”

The last line is a *conversational implicature* since the speech act is a violation against *the maxim of relation*.⁵ Of course Nikander considers it to be a good thing that

⁵ According to Grice, language-users in a conversation aim to co-operate, for instance by adhering to the *maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner*. According to the maxim of relation, the language-user’s speech-turn needs to relate to the matter under discussion. When a language-user deliberately violates a maxim, a *conversational implicature* may arise. A conversational implicature refers to a message conveyed indirectly through what is said in such a way that the hearer understands that the speaker wants to convey something else than what he linguistically says (Grice 1989, pp. 22–40). Grice’s conversational

Ilona offers to do the dishes. However, he does not want to express his gratitude. Since the rules of turn-taking require that he responds to her offer, he chooses to reply with a phrase that does not contain any thanks, but still allows for Ilona to continue as per her offer. It is difficult to say more specifically what Nikander indirectly conveys with line 58. Perhaps that he does not care who does the dishes.

Nikander's manner of communication is unusual first of all because of its taciturnity and, second, because of its lack of emotion. One would assume that Ilona's getting a job would give cause for more elaborate speech acts but instead of reacting with *expressives*, he reacts to Ilona's employment—as well as to her offer to do the dishes—with *assertives*.⁶ He says (54), “[That is] Not bad[ly done],” an assertive, and not, “Congratulations!” or some similar expressive. Also lines 56 and 58 are assertives.

Main points: The lines in the dialogue are short also when the subject matter is important, such as here about Ilona's employment. Instead of praise or congratulatory expressives, Nikander uses assertives, which are litotes and of which the last one is a conversational implicature, which violates the maxim of relation.

11. *Nikander is in a good mood and takes Ilona on a trip in an old Dodge Coronet and suggests that they would drive to Hanko (p. 33)*

- 59 NIKANDER: Let's drive to Hanko.
 60 ILONA: It will be late ...
 61 NIKANDER: Tomorrow is Saturday ... we could stay the night.
 62 ILONA: You're crazy ...
 63 NIKANDER: In a motel.
 64 ILONA: Do you have that kind of cash?
 65 NIKANDER: Always.
 66 ILONA: Well, I guess ... whatever
 67 NIKANDER: Whatever?
 68 ILONA: No, I mean, nice, if we can get some food there.
 69 NIKANDER: We can, if I put some speed into this.

Analysis: Ilona does not immediately accept Nikander's proposal. First she presents a *logos* argument (“It will be late”), then an *ethos* argument (“Crazy”), then another *logos* argument (“Do you have that kind of cash?”), and, last, a *pathos* argument (“I guess ... whatever”).⁷ The last argument is an argument if we understand it as an expression of Ilona's indifference to Nikander's suggestion: Nikander should not spend money on something that does not mean anything to Ilona. Consequently, Nikander reacts by requesting clarification (“Whatever?”), which results in Ilona retracting her previous comment by qualifying it: if they can get food there, the idea actually sounds nice.

implicatures are a different way of describing in part the same things as Searle's indirect speech acts (see the first footnote).

⁶ Searle classifies speech acts into *assertives*, *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives* and *declaratives*. An *assertive* is an assertion and with an *expressive* the language-user expresses his or her feelings (Searle 1975b, pp. 354–361).

⁷ According to Aristotle—and after him in classical rhetoric in general—arguments invented by the speaker belong to one of three groups: *logos* or factual arguments, *ethos* arguments, and *pathos* arguments. Factual arguments are based on cognitive substance, *ethos* arguments are based on the credibility of the speaker, and *pathos* arguments on the feelings evoked by the speaker (Aristotle, I.ii.3–8).

Ilona's comment, "Crazy" shows how unusual a thing the trip is in their lives and the talk about a motel how limited resources they have.

Nikander's good mood is expressed in line 65, a hyperbole. Here it signals that Nikander does not now want to consider the rationality of spending money. Such considerations must not prevent the trip. In other words, line 65 is a secondary speech act, an assertive, whereas the primary speech act is an expressive, the content of which is along the lines of "right now I don't want to think about my financial situation."

Main points: Ilona refutes or examines Nikander's proposition with counter-arguments: three *logos*, one *ethos*, and one *pathos* argument. Nikander's hyperbole, which formally is an assertive, conveys the primary speech act, an expressive.

12. *During dinner at the Casino at Hanko, Ilona and Nikander discuss their relationship (p. 35)*

When the waiter has cleared the table, Ilona examines Nikander with her eyes. He continues to be in a good mood.

- 70 ILONA: Listen ... what is it that you want from me, really?
 71 NIKANDER: What do you mean ... nothing or everything ... a stupid question.
 72 ILONA: No, seriously.
 73 NIKANDER: I don't want shit ... just to be, it's not good to be alone ...
 74 ILONA: I'll be getting an apartment soon.
 75 NIKANDER: Good for you. Either way, all is good for me ... I am Uolevi Nikander, a former butcher, currently a garbage-man, age: thirty-two, bad teeth and a weak head, the liver works, as does the stomach. Ordinary looks, or weak ones. What could I possibly want from anyone?
 76 ILONA: I didn't mean to ...
 77 NIKANDER: Don't interrupt! You leave when you leave, it doesn't bother me.
 78 ILONA: It doesn't?
 79 NIKANDER: No.

But his face tells otherwise, so he turns his gaze out the window through the darkness and lits up a cigarette. Ilona has gone quiet. She reaches for his hand over the table. The earth is formless and empty. Then Nikander again looks at Ilona.

- 80 NIKANDER: I'm just trying to say that, as long as everything is as it is, let me have my fantasies.

Ilona nods and Nikander quickly turns towards the room and signals a waiter that he wants another bottle of wine to replace the emptied one.

- 81 NIKANDER: Okay, then, one shouldn't say just what comes to mind ... one should remember to be cool.
 82 ILONA: Cool ... what's "cool"?
 83 NIKANDER: It's English ... it's difficult to explain.

Analysis: For this dialogue a psychological analysis would be appropriate. From the perspective of a pragmatic analysis we can, however, note how Nikander's lines show that Ilona's question about their relationship is difficult for him. First Nikander avoids answering anything (71)—compare with the previous text (12), line 65—and declares Ilona's question to be stupid. This is a clear violation against the Pragma-Dialectical

Freedom rule and an indirect *argumentum ad hominem*.⁸ When Ilona does not let go and requires an answer, Nikander says that he does not want anything (73), but at the same time he says that it is not good to be alone. Indirectly he thus conveys that he does want to be with Ilona. In other words, in light of the second part of line 73, the first part should be interpreted so that “nothing” actually means “nothing special.”

When Ilona tells that she will soon get an apartment, Nikander gives his longest speech. He presents a condensed and overly realistic description of himself after which he asks rhetorically, “What could I possibly want from anyone?” He does not think that he has much to offer. When Ilona gets another place to stay she will no longer need Nikander and Nikander cannot ask for anything from Ilona. Nikander says that it does not move him, if Ilona leaves, but his body language tells otherwise. Ilona seems to notice this because she grabs his hand. Nikander’s line, “let me keep my fantasies” tells us that their relationship is to Nikander like a dream, better than someone like him, “a former butcher, currently a garbage man,” could hope for.

Nikander ends the situation by saying, “Okay, then, one shouldn’t say just what comes to mind ... one should remember to be cool.” By this he shows that he has said more—and maybe been more personal—than he would have wanted to. That Ilona does not understand what “cool” means tells us about her modest education (and is, I think, an improbable exaggeration on behalf of the screenwriter—there is hardly any place in Finland where this word would not have been known by the mid 1980s).

Does Ilona get an answer to her question (70)? She does get some kind of answer; from Nikander’s replies she gets to know that (a) he does not want to be alone; (b) he does not have any special wishes or demands; (c) he is satisfied with their current situation, even if it is only a fantasy; and (d) he does not want Ilona to leave him (expressed through body language).

Main points: Nikander avoids an awkward question by declaring it to be stupid—a violation against the *Freedom rule* (*argumentum ad hominem*). Nikander’s communication contains pragmatic contradictions (73, 77).

13. Melartin suggests that both couples would spend an evening out together (p. 38)

Nikander and Melartin sit in the roomy cockpit of the refuse collecting truck eating their provisions. In other words they are having lunch hour. On the dashboard there is bread, milk, cheese, and sausage, and both have a short belt-knife in their hand. The car radio plays softly, the weather is beautiful, and it is already late spring.

- 84 MELARTIN: What would you say about going out all together tonight; the wife’s sister comes to baby-sit.
 85 NIKANDER: You mean ... all four of us?
 86 MELARTIN: Yes.

⁸ *The Freedom rule* is one of ten Pragma-Dialectical rules for a critical discussion. The rules describe ideals that give discussants the best chances of reaching a resolution in an argumentative debate. The *Freedom rule* reads: “Parties must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints.” (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, p. 208). *Argumentum ad hominem* is a typical violation against the *Freedom rule*. The rule is also violated when a party declares a subject sacrosanct, not to be discussed.

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87 NIKANDER: Why not ... except I don't know about Ilona's plans ... we haven't seen much of each other lately except during night-time ... and not always then either.

Melartin glances at Nikander, but does not ask anything. He finishes his milk and scrunches the carton.

88 NIKANDER: She's had a lot of things to do because of the place where she's working at. But I guess she'll come. If I ask her.

89 MELARTIN: A classic night; first a flicker, then to the bar.

90 NIKANDER: Okay.

Analysis: The uncertainty in Nikander's answers conveys his uncertainty about his relationship with Ilona. According to the assumptions of *turn-taking theory*, Melartin should take a turn after Nikander's line 87, but he says nothing. In this way he signals that he is not going to pry about Nikander's private life by asking about his relationship with Ilona. When he speaks after Nikander's double-turn (87–88), he ignores Nikander's turns and sticks strictly to the theme of his proposition and in line 89 specifies more precisely what kind of evening he has in mind. Line 89 is in relationship to line 88 a violation against the maxim of relation since the lines do not relate to each other. The conversational implicature that this creates is already earlier conveyed, that Melartin is not going to comment on the relationship of Nikander and Ilona.

Without Ilona, a basic prerequisite for Melartin's proposition is missing. Therefore Nikander does not, at first, respond to the proposition but starts thinking about Ilona. Before Nikander can say anything, he needs to clarify the possibility of getting Ilona to join them. When he has reached the conclusion that Ilona probably will join, he can answer affirmatively.

Main points: Through the insecurity in Nikander's lines, the screenwriter conveys to the viewer the difficult situation in the relationship of Nikander and Ilona. By violating the implicit turn-taking rule, Melartin signals that he does not wish to interfere with Nikander's and Ilona's matters, nor comment upon them. He signals the same again with a conversational maxim when he ignores Nikander's line (a violation against the maxim of relation).

14. Ilona comes home; she did not come to the agreed upon date (text 13), and Nikander had had to wait for her alone outside the cinema (pp. 41–42)

Nikander sits in the recliner in the kitchen and stares at Ilona, who enters through the front door, hangs her coat on the coat hanger, and enters the kitchen. She sits at the table and looks at Nikander seriously.

91 ILONA: Well, then ...

92 NIKANDER: Well what?

93 ILONA: Let me have it.

94 NIKANDER: What?

95 ILONA: I didn't come although I promised.

96 NIKANDER: So I noticed.

97 ILONA: Don't you have anything to say about that?

98 NIKANDER: No. Pig.

99 ILONA: Quite lame ...

100 NIKANDER: Isn't it.

He rises, staggers towards Ilona and pulls the chair away from under her. Logically she falls on the floor and from there looks up towards Nikander, as from an angle below.

101 ILONA: Now that's a little better.

102 NIKANDER: Don't talk shit ... this isn't theatre. If you have a bad conscience then I can't help you.

103 ILONA: Why should I have that?

104 NIKANDER: What do I know ... maybe you're just lost ... maybe not ...

105 ILONA: I'll leave in the morning.

106 NIKANDER: Very good. But why wait 'til morning.

107 ILONA: I can't pretend feelings that I don't have.

108 NIKANDER: Who's said anything about feelings? Throw your slippers in the suitcase and forget about romance ...

109 ILONA: I'm sorry ... I guess I haven't been of much joy to you ...

110 NIKANDER: More than you know, but let's not talk about it. Do you have to leave ...

111 ILONA: I guess not ... but this isn't gonna work.

112 NIKANDER: Of course it isn't gonna ... work.

He kneels on the floor next to Ilona and rests his head on her shoulder. There they sit on the floor embracing, not knowing what they are supposed to say or to do, and all is very sad. But that is probably how life is.

113 NIKANDER: I didn't have any ulterior motives when I said that you could stay here. I just wouldn't leave even a fly out on the street.

114 ILONA: Don't lie.

115 NIKANDER: I will so lie. It is my constitutional right.

116 ILONA: So, weren't you at all interested in me ... I mean, in that way?

117 NIKANDER: What an earth "that way" ... don't talk smutty.

118 ILONA: I'll leave in the morning all the same.

119 NIKANDER: Sure ... that's already settled. It's okay to leave; this isn't some kind of penal institution, even if it would feel like one.

120 ILONA: It doesn't ...

121 NIKANDER: Could you be quiet for a while.

122 ILONA: Sure.

123 NIKANDER: Then be.

Fade out.

Analysis: In this scene we have the only quarrel between Ilona and Nikander. In the first part of the dialogue (91–100) it is interesting that Ilona is the one to start the conversation. She seems to expect Nikander to immediately start to reproach her (“Well, then ...” “Let me have it.”). Instead Nikander speaks as if it would not be apparent what they should talk about (“Well what?,” “What?”). When Ilona does not let go and directly confronts him about whether he has something to say, he responds, “No. Pig.” This direct violation against *the maxim of quality*⁹ can be explained by noting that those previous lines by Nikander, which give the impression that he has nothing to say, do not express his true feelings. “Pig” is the interpretative key to his previous lines and shows what he

⁹ According to Grice's *maxim of quality* the language-user should always tell the truth and not say anything that he or she knows to be false or anything for which he or she has inadequate information (Grice 1989, p. 27).

really feels. In reality he is angry with Ilona but could not at first bring himself to say so. Calling Ilona a pig does not suffice for Ilona as a display of emotions so she comments on it as “quite lame.” When Nikander after this draws away the chair from under her it is evident that it is difficult for Nikander to formulate his feelings into words so he seeks help from an action. Ilona accepts this (101).

In the following part (101–112) Nikander exhibits his emotions more clearly in his words. When Ilona informs him that she will leave in the morning, Nikander suggests through an indirect speech act that she could leave sooner. “Why wait ’til morning?” is a question (a *directive*)¹⁰ under which we have the primary speech act, the assertion “no need to wait ’til morning” (an assertive). The manner Nikander uses is more indirect but no less friendly or hard; this indirect speech act is a feature of style. Ilona then goes to the main point: she lacks feelings for Nikander (107). She expresses this indirectly through a negative assertive (the secondary speech act, 107), under which we find an expressive (the primary speech act). It is not a question about Ilona’s ability to pretend feelings but about what she actually feels.

Nikander wants to express that Ilona is important to him (“more than you know”) and asks her to stay—again using an indirect speech act to convey a request. The question, “Do you have to leave?” is not a question about the necessity for Ilona to leave but conveys Nikander’s wish that Ilona would not leave. After this Nikander again uses an act as a continuation for his words, to support them, when he kneels on the floor next to Ilona.

In the third part (113–123) Nikander goes back to the beginning of their relationship and says that he did not have any ulterior motives when he offered Ilona a place for the night. Ilona does not believe him and Nikander confirms her suspicion—he is lying. Still, he does not wish to answer Ilona’s question about whether he was already then interested in Ilona “in that way.” Nikander’s line 119 is a typical hyperbole: Ilona may leave in the morning since Nikander’s place “isn’t some kind of penal institution, even if it would feel like one.” How should we understand this sentence? Considering the context, Nikander here expresses something about how he thinks Ilona experiences their relationship: she does not want to stay with him because she does not want to be with him (as one does not want to stay in a penal institution—an analogy), nor do her feelings towards Nikander correspond to his feelings towards her.

When Ilona protests, Nikander interrupts. Here (121), again, he uses an indirect speech act, a question, to express the primary speech act, a request. In other words, he does not ask about Ilona’s ability to be quiet for a while, but requests that she would be quiet for a while. The dialogue could very well end here, but Ilona goes on and answers, “Sure,” to which Nikander takes one more turn, “Then be.” These lines violate *the maxim of quantity*¹¹ but defend their place because they soften the end of the dialogue. Had Ilona been quiet after Nikander’s line 121, one could think that she would be angry, for example. Now she gives a reassuring, friendly answer and similarly Nikander’s last line is now friendlier than in 121. At the same time lines 122–123 reflect the clumsiness and lack of finesse that is typical for the dialogues in the film.

¹⁰ In Searle’s speech act theory, *directives* are speech acts with which one tries to get the hearer to do something, for instance to answer a question (Searle 1975b, pp. 355–356).

¹¹ According to Grice’s *maxim of quantity* the language-user should give the appropriate amount of information, not too little, nor too much (Grice 1989, pp. 26–27).

Main points: In the quarrel Nikander has difficulties expressing his disappointment and anger and first does not want to admit to any problem at all. The violation of the maxim of quality gives an interpretative key to Nikander's lines at the beginning of the dialogue, which turn out to be insincere. He uses an indirect speech act as an element of style—under the question (a directive) we find an assertion (an assertive).

Iiona describes her feelings indirectly by a secondary speech act, a negative assertive, which conveys the primary speech act, an expressive, that she does not have feelings for Nikander. Nikander, in turn, again uses an indirect speech act, a question, to convey a request that Iiona would not leave.

Nikander uses hyperbole to describe how he thinks Iiona feels: Nikander's home is like a penal institution. Maybe this analogy includes also their relationship and not—or even primarily—his apartment. In the same way as one does not want to be at a penal institution, Iiona does not want to be in their relationship.

Nikander once more uses an indirect speech act, a question, to convey a request, the primary speech act. The last lines violate the maxim of quantity, but are suitable as a stylistic means to soften the end of the dialogue. The style can be described as clumsy or lacking in finesse.

15. Melartin fetches Nikander to work (p. 43)

Melartin stands in the middle of the room and looks at Nikander's figure at the bottom of the bed.

- 124 MELARTIN: Are you ill?
 125 NIKANDER: I am ... spiritually.
 126 MELARTIN: The shit still has to be collected.
 127 NIKANDER: No can do.
 128 MELARTIN: Are you burnout?
 129 NIKANDER: Huh?
 130 MELARTIN: Forget it ... do you have coffee? I'll make some.
 131 NIKANDER: Bring booze ... cremation ...

Melartin grows tired of standing and sits down.

- 132 MELARTIN: You know damn well that you need a physician's certificate or you'll be fired.
 133 NIKANDER: Such a physician hasn't been born yet.
 134 MELARTIN: Are you coming or not?
 135 NIKANDER: Hell, yes, I'm coming ... who else would take care of it ... think about it; the cowboy dies and then what happens? All of society stops, drifts into chaos, every place full of garbage, dead rats floating around in the bay of Töölö ... why shouldn't we go?

He gets up, goes into the entrance-hall, takes his coat and rushes out so quickly that Melartin has to struggle to keep pace.

Analysis: After Iiona has left, Nikander is depressed and is not leaving for work. His work-partner Melartin comes to fetch him from home. First Melartin checks if Nikander is ill. This would be an acceptable reason to be away from work, otherwise holds that the trashes need to be collected. When it becomes clear that Nikander is not physically ill,

Melartin repeats the narrative that both know well that goes with the situation, “you need a physician’s certificate or you’ll be fired,” if you are away from work. After Melartin has summarized the situation (134), Nikander surprisingly gives a short speech about the necessity of refuse collection. He uses a metaphor where the refuse collector is like a cowboy who does away the trash. Without him society drifts into chaos.

A tension in the dialogue emerges when Nikander first says that the collection of trash will not take place this morning (127), but a moment later asks, “why shouldn’t we go?” and then rushes out so quickly that Melartin has to struggle to keep pace. Nikander’s sudden change of mind results in a pragmatic inconsistency.

Nikander’s decision shows Nikander’s high working moral. Although he spiritually would not have the energy to work, his appreciation for his work—and maybe for work generally—is so high that he can summon up strength even when none seems to be found. However, he did need Melartin’s encouragement.

Main points: Melartin takes support from a standard narrative that suits the situation. Nikander uses a metaphor about the refuse collector as a cowboy. Nikander suddenly changes his mind, which leads to a pragmatic inconsistency in his argumentation.

16. Ilona and another salesperson in the clothing store are discussing Nikander and men in general (p. 44)

Ilona’s colleague, a woman around thirty-two years of age, smiles as friendly as is possible and appropriate in such a situation towards a leaving customer. As the door slams shut the smile drops from her face as a fork from a plate. She goes to the door, locks it, and lifts up the “Just a moment”-sign, turns towards Ilona, and lits up a cigarette.

136	SALESPERSON:	I can’t stand this any more; let’s have a break ... why don’t they stay at home if they’re not going to buy anything anyway.
137	ILONA:	Maybe they’re homeless, like me.
138	SALESPERSON:	A woman’s home is where her powder case is.
139	ILONA:	Where’s that from?
140	SALESPERSON:	I made it up myself. Just now.
141	ILONA:	Oh ... I’m an idiot.
142	SALESPERSON:	Probably ... otherwise you wouldn’t be here ... how so?
143	ILONA:	I lived with a garbage collector, but I left him.
144	SALESPERSON:	Why?
145	ILONA:	I wish I knew ... he was always so helpless. Or not helpless, but somehow unhappy ...
146	SALESPERSON:	So I guess he’s happy now.
147	ILONA:	I don’t think so. Do you?
148	SALESPERSON:	It won’t be long before he finds a new one ... men always do. Because deep down they don’t care.
149	ILONA:	Nikander did care ... I think.
150	SALESPERSON:	Was his name Nikander?
151	ILONA:	Yeah ... Uolevi Nikander.
152	SALESPERSON:	Was that a suitable name for him?
153	ILONA:	It fits him somehow, yes.
154	SALESPERSON:	Then I understand that you left him.
155	ILONA:	No you don’t ... but he was better than many others ...
156	SALESPERSON:	Shall we have some coffee?
157	ILONA:	Yes ... let’s.

FINNISH WORKING-CLASS ARGUMENTATION—A MINIMALIST EXERCISE

Behind the shop there is a cubicle that marks the social area, with a sink and on top of that a coffee maker. Ilona sits down and the other woman starts working the coffee maker.

158 ILONA: He was actually quite sweet.
159 SALESPERSON: Well go on running back then.
160 ILONA: I don't think so. Are you married?
161 SALESPERSON: I was.
162 ILONA: Divorced ...
163 SALESPERSON: Widowed ... he died.

There is a moment's silence. Both think for themselves.

164 SALESPERSON: That's why ... no, forget it. You must lie on your bed as you've made it.
165 ILONA: As you've made it, so you must lie on it.
166 SALESPERSON: What difference does it make? But one shouldn't despise it ... if someone cares. There aren't that many, nor will there be.
167 ILONA: I guess not.
168 SALESPERSON: Definitely not. I should know.

Analysis: A characteristic of this dialogue is the absolute nature of the statements. It is a kind of hyperbole. First the salesperson says (136), "I can't stand this any more" although she probably means that she is tired of customers who do not buy anything and that she needs a break. "A woman's home is where her powder case is" is a sententious phrase, an assertive—also a hyperbole. Ilona says, "I'm an idiot" (141) although she means, that she should have understood that the salesperson made up the previous line herself. Also this line is a hyperbole.

The salesperson's line (146), that Nikander is probably happy now, is not a sensible conclusion. When Ilona asks more about this, the salesperson specifies that "men always do" find a new one because "deep down they don't care"—a rather generalizing and absolute statement. Another blunt conclusion is that Ilona left Nikander because his name was Uolevi (154). A third surprisingly sudden conclusion leading to a sudden suggestion is line 159. Taken the age of the salesperson into consideration, line 168 is also not sufficiently argued for.

For the viewer the dialogue seems to have the purpose of conveying an important matter, Ilona still cares for Nikander: (1) Ilona does not know why she left him (143); (2) she believes that Nikander cared for her (contrary to the salesperson's experience, according to which men deep down do not care) (149); (3) Nikander was better than many others (150); (4) he was actually quite sweet (158); (5) there are not that many who care, nor will there be (167). It seems that Ilona's thoughts get clearer during this dialogue.

Main points: A feature of this dialogue is the absolute character of many lines. This absoluteness takes the form of hyperbole and non-sensible conclusions.

Through the dialogue, the screenwriter conveys to the viewer that Ilona cares for Nikander and thus prepares for the later development of the story.

17. Melartin argues about Nikander's strange behaviour (p. 48)

Melartin and Nikander [the manuscript erroneously has "Melartin and Kuosmanen"] are sitting opposite of each other at the table in the dressing room and are playing cards, silently as two sphinxes, until the end of the deal.

169 MELARTIN: You lost again.
 170 NIKANDER: Every time, I wonder what that's all about?
 171 MELARTIN: You lack the willpower to win.
 172 NIKANDER: I guess so ... you have a kid, don't you?
 173 MELARTIN: Yeah.
 174 NIKANDER: What's that like?
 175 MELARTIN: It's okay.
 176 NIKANDER: Do you want to get beaten up?
 177 MELARTIN: By you?
 178 NIKANDER: Yeah.
 179 MELARTIN: No.
 180 NIKANDER: I thought as much.
 181 MELARTIN: What do you mean?
 182 NIKANDER: I just need to do something ... will you buy a VCR?
 183 MELARTIN: I already have one.
 184 NIKANDER: I could sell you one.
 185 MELARTIN: I don't need a second set.
 186 NIKANDER: You could put it in the kitchen.
 187 MELARTIN: There I already have a washing machine ... and a wife.
 188 NIKANDER: Yeah, sure ... she could watch it while she's cooking.
 189 MELARTIN: Are you messed up somehow?
 190 NIKANDER: Me? Why? Could be ... how does one know?
 191 MELARTIN: By comparison. I, for instance, am healthy ... if you're different you have to be ill somehow.
 192 NIKANDER: I lost again. Let's quit. Will you go for a beer tonight?
 193 MELARTIN: No can do, the wife goes.
 194 NIKANDER: As always.

Analysis: Nikander's talk does not make sense and Melartin draws the conclusion that he is messed up somehow. His argument is analogous: since Nikander behaves differently than Melartin, Nikander is messed up. The implicit premise is that Melartin's behaviour is the normal, healthy, way. In all its simplicity this exemplifies man's way of considering himself the measure of all things. The viewer knows that the reason for Nikander's restlessness is that his relationship with Ilona is on hold. For some reason Melartin does not understand this.

Main points: Nikander's restless state of mind surfaces as nonsensical talk. Based on analogous argumentation, Melartin draws the conclusion that Nikander's mental health has been upset.

18. Nikander meets Ilona and asks her to accompany him to meet his sister (p. 49)

Nikander leans against the wall on the building next door when Ilona exits the shop together with a male colleague. Ilona is a bit startled when she sees Nikander; her feelings, if she ever had them, are not completely gone. Nikander steps out in front of her.

195 NIKANDER: Hi.
 196 ILONA: Hello.

197 NIKANDER: I happened to walk by.
 198 ILONA: Yeah.

Nikander turns towards the man.

199 NIKANDER: What's up?
 200 MIES: Nothing really ...
 201 NIKANDER: Do you want to get punched in your face?
 202 MIES: No.
 203 NIKANDER: Then take off ... we have business.

He looks so intimidating that the man nods to Ilona and starts to walk down the street. Nikander looks at Ilona apologetically.

204 NIKANDER: I'm sorry.
 205 ILONA: I see you've become violent.
 206 NIKANDER: Yep. Are you in a hurry?
 207 ILONA: A bit, yes.
 208 NIKANDER: I'm sure you are. I am too. I'm going to visit my sister. She used to go to a university in Stockholm, but now she's in a mental hospital. Would you care to join me?
 209 ILONA: I don't think so.
 210 NIKANDER: Yeah. See you.

With that he starts walking. Ilona watches the sad retreating figure thoughtfully, then snaps out of her thoughts and steers towards the bus stop.

Analysis: In lines 199–203, Nikander uses three lines with the purpose of getting a moment alone with Ilona. Instead of explaining this to the man or directly asking him to give them a moment, he asks, “Do you want to get punched in your face?” This time the question is not the carrier of a primary speech act, but the pair of another speech act, 203: he wants to talk “business” alone with Ilona. Line 201 (“Do you want to get punched in your face?”) prepares for line 203 (“Then take off”). Without 201, line 203 would not be as powerful. Now the exhortation to leave gets support from a veiled threat. Lines 201–203 almost make up a *modus tollens* argumentation (the form of a *modus tollens* argumentation is: If P, then Q; ¬Q; therefore ¬P):

If you don't want to get punched in your face (P), then take off (Q)
You don't take off (-Q)

Therefore you want to get punched in your face (-P).

The argumentation violates the Pragma-Dialectical Freedom rule and is an *argumentum ad baculum* fallacy (this fallacy is based on a threat and is therefore erroneous argumentation). Here, however, it is difficult to consider it to be proper argumentation at all.

Why does Nikander not act more politely? Among the possible explanations we find that he does not have the energy or will to be polite—perhaps because he does not like the man (because he is with Ilona) or because he wants to appear in a strong way, and a polite request does not fit. His behaviour may also be the cause of both these reasons.

In the conversation with Ilona, Nikander confirms that he has become violent. This should probably be understood in the same way as when he says that he is busy. Both are hyperbolic claims: in reality he has not become violent, nor is he busy.

The invitation to Ilona to accompany him to a mental hospital is strange so it is only natural for Nikander to just say “Yeah” to her refusal.

Main points: Nikander’s way of getting a moment alone with Ilona is unusual. Instead of a request, he uses three lines, which indirectly convey his wish. Although the lines seemingly form a *modus tollens* type of argumentation, they violate the Freedom rule with an *ad baculum* fallacy. Two of Nikander’s later claims are hyperbolic.

19. A failed dialogue (p. 54)

Nikander walks with his hands in his pockets towards home along quiet streets. He is no more sad than happy; the evening is peaceful and the smoggy air of the city is good to breathe. Every now and then a fully packed bus to the suburbs passes by, the last ones of the night.

Suddenly a few American cars move up alongside him almost silently and through the front window pops out the head of a boozed up young man.

211 HEAD: Hey, shithead ...

Nikander glances at the screaming man. On the backseat sits a couple of similar faces, the driver’s face is not visible. He does not answer, just continues walking forward.

212 HEAD: (to the driver) Stop ...

The car stops a little distance in front of Nikander and the head gets out followed by the faces that sat in the backseat, one of them has in his hand a sawed-off baseball bat. Nikander is forced to halt as they cut off his route. We would lie if we would claim that Nikander at that moment was not afraid.

213 HEAD: Listen, nitwit, why don’t you answer when you’re talked to?

When Nikander continues to be silent the head gets a bit confused and seeks support from the faces.

214 HEAD: I guess he’s mute ... are you mute? Answer me!

Nikander shrugs and tries to pass. The head hits him from the side on his face. Nikander would remain standing unless one of the faces would not get excited upon seeing his helplessness and would hit him with the baseball bat on the arm while letting out an obscure bellow from his mouth. Nikander’s hand becomes limp and he falls down. Having gotten him on the ground, the head and the faces go on and kick him for a while until they get bored, get in the car, and disappear. Until the next night they would be calm.

Nikander lies on the pavement for a long time before he re-gains consciousness enough to have the strength to drag himself into the nearby gateway to a building. With his last bit of strength he somehow gets himself into safety into a recycling-container for paper.

Analysis: According to the expectation spelled out in the theory of turn-taking, a language-user expects a turn from the other party after he has finished his own turn. In line 213 the man gets angry because Nikander does not fulfil this expectation. Of course it would be unreasonable to demand that the implicit expectations of turn-taking would have to be followed when the dialogue starts off with an insult (211). For some reason the

man (the “head”) does not seem to understand this and demands that Nikander takes part in his dialogue.

Nikander would probably have escaped the situation by answering the man. The fact that he against his better knowledge does not answer indicates his indifference towards his own life, which he has already earlier exhibited (131).

Main points: Nikander refuses to follow the implicit expectations of turn-taking since the other party opens the dialogue with an insult. After three attempts the man gets angry and together with his entourage assaults Nikander. Nikander’s way of acting signals a lack of will to live.

20. *Nikander proposes to Ilona (p. 59)*

Melartin stops the refuse collecting truck in front of the clothing store and Nikander jumps out and walks straight into the store where Ilona is waiting for a customer outside a changing booth. In a mirror Ilona sees how Nikander comes towards her, and she turns. Nikander was never especially representative, but at this moment, in spite of all bandages and bruises, there is something noble about him, something that stems from his pride as refuse collector, something that is amplified by the contrast with the environment. He stops three feet away from Ilona.

- 215 NIKANDER: I came for you.
 216 ILONA: What for?
 217 NIKANDER: The honeymoon. You can’t make it without me.
 218 ILONA: I can’t, can I?
 219 NIKANDER: No.
 220 ILONA: I guess you’re right.
 221 NIKANDER: Sure I am. Shall we go?
 222 ILONA: I have this job ...
 223 NIKANDER: We’ll get another one later.

The customer comes out from the changing-booth and looks first at herself and then with a question at Ilona.

- 224 WOMAN: What do you think?
 225 NIKANDER: It’s very pretty. You can pay at the counter.

She turns again towards Ilona expecting an answer. The shop owner, who is on his weekly inspection-round, looks at Nikander with growing irritation and then comes to them and stops next to Ilona.

- 226 MAN: Are you buying something?
 227 NIKANDER (to Ilona): Who’s that?
 228 ILONA: I’ve no idea.
 229 MAN: If you’re not buying anything, I have to ask you to ...
 230 NIKANDER: Get lost.
 231 MAN: Miss Rajamäki, I ...
 232 ILONA: You heard what he said.

The man turns around and goes to a phone.

- 233 ILONA: You’ll be able to support me, won’t you?
 234 NIKANDER: Small potatoes.

Analysis: In the final dialogue of analysis, Nikander has overcome himself and decided to win Ilona back. In a brave attempt he proposes to Ilona indirectly by saying that he has come to take her on the honeymoon, because Ilona would not make it without him. At first, Ilona presents a control-question (218) but then quickly accepts Nikander's claim, "You can't make it without me." Her job, however, presents an obstacle for leaving, but Nikander offers a larger perspective: a new job can always be found later.

The verbal scantiness here follows the style of the other dialogues. The style is the same whether the topic is a date, staying over for the night, work, or a proposal.

When Nikander is unacceptably rude towards the shop owner (230), Ilona supports Nikander (232). This shows to the viewer how committed Ilona suddenly is towards Nikander. Ilona's last line exhibits a traditional woman's role in relationship with a man, which is a blunt contrast with the preceding (Ilona easily got a job and her own apartment without Nikander's help). Nikander's newly found self-assurance is enough for him to claim that supporting Ilona is going to be no trouble at all (234).

In the last dialogue of the film (which is not among the ones analysed), Nikander states that the honeymoon is convenient now that he, because of the assault, is on sick leave and Ilona now is unemployed. In the final scene, Nikander drives the refuse collecting truck away towards the North side of the Long Bridge, with Ilona, like a cowboy towards the sunset.

Main points: Nikander proposes to Ilona indirectly. In order for them to go on a honeymoon they need to get married. The verbal scantiness is the same whether the topic is a date, staying over for the night, work, or a proposal. Ilona concedes to Nikander's proposal just as soon as the practical matters are settled: her current job and subsistence. With typical three and two word phrases, Nikander assures her that both will be taken care of.

4. THE SPEECH AND ARGUMENTATION CULTURE IN "SHADOWS"

Next I will collect the results of the analyses. A general observation regards *the taciturnity of the dialogues*. We get the impression that this taciturnity is not due to limited linguistic abilities of the language-users—a lack of words—but that it is *a matter of style*. In *Shadows* everybody talks in this same way, so it is not a question of the style of just a few persons. It seems that Kaurismäki presents this taciturn style as a natural, even beautiful, mode of communication. The dialogues lack all phrases of politeness, explanations, subordinate clauses, and excursuses. Still, the characters understand each other well and there are usually no problems with the communication.

In the following paragraphs I present a few specific characteristics of the dialogues. I group them into six groups: indirect communication, violations against the conversational maxims, rhetorical figures, short lines, argumentation, and humour.

Indirect communication In many instances the characters communicate their message indirectly. Instead of expressing their feelings directly or saying what they really mean, they choose an indirect way to communicate. This often happens through indirect speech acts. For example, an invitation is presented through a question (text 1), a feeling through an assertion (text 11), an assertion through a question (text 14), a feeling through a negative assertion (text 14), and a request through a question (text 14). The characters also avoid saying things directly through other means. A girlfriend says "no" without

using this particular word (text 7) because of friendship—a direct “no” would be too harsh an answer. Similarly Ilona avoids Nikander’s suggestion for a date (text 8) with comments and questions, which indicate her hesitations. Nikander declares Ilona’s question “stupid” (text 12) because he does not want to answer it. Melartin violates the expectations of turn-taking as a sign that he does not want to comment on Nikander’s and Ilona’s relationship-problems (text 13). Nikander uses a threat instead of a request because he wants to signal his position in relationship to Ilona and does not want to appear weak (text 18), and in the last dialogue of analysis he proposes to Ilona indirectly. We also have indirect communication when Nikander uses an action as a continuation of his words, to support them (text 14).

Violations against the conversational maxims The characters violate conversational maxims on several occasions. The conversational implicatures are not always clear. Nikander expresses his anger by breaking the maxim of relation (text 10). Breaking the same maxim, Melartin politely expresses that he does not want to meddle with problems in Nikander’s relations (text 13). When Nikander is angry he lies about his feelings and violates the maxim of quality (text 14). The screenwriter lets Ilona and Nikander violate the maxim of quantity in order to achieve a certain style (text 14).

Rhetorical figures The following rhetorical tropes and figures occur in the text: hyperbole (4, 11, 14, 16, 18), litotes (10), analogy (14), and metaphor (15). The use of hyperbole can, on the one hand, be explained as a feature of style, and, on the other, as a way of expressing an idea so that it emerges more clearly with the help of exaggeration. A clear example of this is when Nikander uses the phrase “penal institution” for his home (and for the relationship between him and Ilona) (text 14).

Short lines A considerable amount of the lines of the dialogues are short. This is a conspicuous characteristic. At times this makes the dialogue uneven or halting (e.g. text 9), but generally it gives a delighting character to the film. Things stay clearly in focus when unnecessary talk is avoided. Of the two hundred and thirty-four lines of the twenty analysed dialogues, one hundred and sixteen lines only have one, two, or three words. When half of the lines are this short, it gives the whole film a certain style. The style is the same whether the topic is a date, accommodation, work, or a proposal.

Argumentation The characters do not argue much and when they do their argumentation is simple and defective. The argumentation of the shop manager (text 4) is unbalanced and faulty; and Rahikainen’s argumentation requires more arguments in order to be convincing—he does not see the differences between the material starting-points of himself and of his discussion-partner (text 5). Nikander presents binary everyday logic (text 9): the problem is seemingly simple, either/or. Only in one dialogue do we have different arguments: when Nikander wants to take Ilona to Hanko, she puts forth four counter-arguments (*logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* arguments). Nikander’s analogy is far fetched (text 14) and Melartin’s analogous argumentation is halting (text 17). The argumentation also exhibits inconsistencies. The employees are “wonderful” but are let go (text 4), Melartin does not want to go to work but then wants to go (text 15) and the salesperson gives absolute advice that is not based on sound argumentation (text 16) and that is clearly hyperbolic.

Humour We find humour on two levels in the film: between the characters in the film and between the film and the viewer. Humour between the characters in the film is scarce and has therefore not been analysed above. It is not an important characteristic of

the communication in the film. The only joke is found in dialogue 2. What we do find are comical traits intended to be humoristic for the viewer. However, these are difficult to assess since what is experienced as comical varies from viewer to viewer. In the following dialogues I suggest that we have fairly clear comical traits: 3, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20. In most cases the humour is based on one or several of the five characteristics described above. In some cases, a combination of one or several of these characteristics, together with the specific context, enhances the comical effect. For instance, one does not usually propose in such a place and in such a way as Nikander does in dialogue 20.

In summary, the speech and argumentation culture of *Shadows in Paradise* can be described as follows. As far as this culture depicts the speech and argumentation culture of the Finnish working-class, this summary also describes this. In any case, it describes Kaurismäki's depiction of it.

- A characteristic of the speech and argumentation culture is its taciturnity. Half of the lines consist of one, two, or three words. This economy of words is not dependent on the topic but is practiced with all themes.
- The dialogues lack all normal phrases of politeness, ad hoc explanations, subordinate clauses, and excursuses. The style is at times clumsy and it is consistently without finesse. This economic style does not, however, lead to problems in the communication.
- A considerable part of that which the characters want to communicate, they communicate indirectly using indirect speech acts to convey primary speech acts and conversational implicatures. When confronted with difficult subjects, avoidance is also used, which can lead to superfluous lines or problematic argumentation. Actual argumentation seldom occurs and when it does occur, it is problematic, typically because the arguments are insufficient for the standpoint.
- Hyperbole is the most common rhetorical figure and it is used in a way that lets us understand that the discussants are used to hyperbolic phrases and know how to interpret them correctly.
- Some of the dialogues contain humour that is generated between the viewer and the film. The characters in the film do not themselves find these features to be comical.

5. CONCLUSION

What have I analysed here? First of all it is a matter of a film manuscript and therefore an artificial material. When we compare the manuscript with the film, we note the following: the manuscript only exhibits the view of the author but the film also exhibits the actors' interpretation of the manuscript. With this particular film, the manuscript gives a clearer picture than the film of Kaurismäki's understanding of working-class verbal communication. Regarding how working-class culture is depicted, the style and the impressions are, however, the same in the film as in the manuscript.

Can we, based on the analysis, draw any conclusions about the speech culture of the working-class? The answer depends on the following question. Does the speech and

argumentation culture in the film depict Finnish working-culture? The reception that the film got in Finland indicates that Kaurismäki has succeeded in depicting the working-class culture in a way that resonates well with the viewers. If his depiction had been unrealistic or misleading, the reception of the film would hardly have been as favourable. It is true, however, that one film-critic considered the events and the way they were depicted as quite artificial (*SKF* 10, p. 134). He did not, however, criticise the dialogue. To the extent that the film perhaps can be blamed to be artificial one needs to acknowledge that this holds even less true for the manuscript than for the actual film. If the events, the photography, or the dialogue has in some way been exaggerated, it has been done in a way that accentuates that which Kaurismäki wants to convey, not in a way that distorts it, but in a way that amplifies it. If this understanding is correct, the results of the analysis compared with actual working-class argumentation, may possibly be a bit too strong, but they should point in the right direction. What can be said with certainty is that the results show how Kaurismäki has portrayed Finnish working-class argumentation and rhetoric.

To the most part the review of the press was positive and the film was praised as the best that “has been seen in Finnish film in a long time,” and this especially because the film does not try to be “artistic,” technically ground breaking, or otherwise extraordinary (*SKF* 10, p. 134).

This analysis is not an analysis of authentic natural working-class culture. Still, the results describe something that is characteristic of this culture because it is precisely this culture that Kaurismäki wanted to describe with his film.

A good friend of mine read a draft of this article and told me that she on her way home had sat on the local bus next to a couple that was “as from one of Kaurismäki’s films.” She conveyed to me in writing a part of their dialogue, exhibiting the same rapport typical of Kaurismäki’s films:

WOMAN: Erkki! Did we need to buy anything else from the store except sausage?
[Pause.]
MAN: No.
[Long pause.]

Examples like these are not hard to come by in Finnish everyday life.

[Link to commentary](#)

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