"A WHITE LILY AMONG THE BEASTS" – TRIANGULAR DESIRE IN THE NOVEL SERIES FRÖKNARNA VON PAHLEN

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In my paper I will discuss the novel series Fröknarna von Pahlen [The Misses von Pahlen] I-VII (1930-35) by the Swedish writer Agnes von Krusenstjerna (1894-1940) and analyze how the writer uses trope of triangular desire. Krusenstjerna wrote the Pahlen series in the thirties, in a time of Nazi awakening in Europe. Her novels, despite the reactionary times and her being a female writer, were rather brave and outspoken. Not only does she, as a woman, write about female desires, but she also introduces a feminist utopia of a women-only community. Her novels provoked the moral guardians in Sweden. Like her contemporary colleague, the English writer Radclyffe Hall who wrote the provoking novel Well of Loneliness (1928), she introduces “lesbian” desire, but she does not condemn the heroine, Angela, for her sexual deviances – in the end she both gets the princess, bears an illegitimate child and forms a chosen family. But not all of the sexual deviants is portrayed in the same sympathetic manner as Angela – the male homosexuals are portrayed as rather disgusting and grotesque. What Krusenstjerna criticizes is not the sexual orientation in itself, be it straight or gay, but a sexual expression which is cut off from the “love of life”.

In my interpretation I will show how the writer through the triangle parodies heteronormativity and patriarchal homosociality, and introduces a feminist utopia in which “love/devotion of life” is seen as the moral guideline and where female sexuality is celebrated (– reproductive or not). Through satire/parody and the triangular desire Krusenstjerna plays with the traditional roles of men and women, and causes something that could be read as gender trouble.