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Gay porn, politics and lifestyle in 1980s Finland: The short life of *Mosse* magazine

The publishing company Lehtimiehet introduced a novelty on the Finnish market in 1983: *Mosse*, a magazine for men sexually attracted to men. Named after the first out gay male celebrity in Finland, Monsieur Mosse, a.k.a. Raimo Jääskeläinen – celebrity hairdresser, gossipier, friend and foe to the stars – *Mosse* nevertheless insisted it had nothing to do with its namesake, promoting a less flamboyant image of gay men instead. Combining photos of nude men, porn stories and articles about gay life, *Mosse* mixed porn and entertainment with gay rights. Published by a mainstream commercial publisher, *Mosse* was a new breed in the Finnish context where magazines addressing a male homosexual readership had up to then only been published by gay rights organisations. Although the porn publisher, Erotica, published a rivalling gay magazine, *Adonis* in 1984, both *Mosse* and *Adonis* nevertheless folded within a few years, and no further similar enterprises have since followed. The early to mid-1980s therefore remain a curious moment when print gay porn was considered profitable on the small national market.

The gay press has been seen as central for the formation of the gay liberation movement (Rosqvist & Andersson 2016, 37; Rosqvist & Arnberg 2015, 766), but for a long time glossy magazines focusing on sex and consumer culture were largely written out of gay histories where politically inclined periodicals gained most visibility and gravity (Hilderbrand 2013, 374–375). As a result, there is surprisingly little research on gay porn magazines (see Waugh 1996; Rehberg 2016). In the Nordic context, Klara Arnberg (2010) has examined gay magazines within the economic history of the Swedish pornographic press and, together with

Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist and Catrine Andersson, extended analysis to debates on sexual identity in Swedish gay press, discussing tensions between political and commercial print cultures from the late 1960s to the 1980s (Rosqvist & Andersson 2016; Rosqvist & Arnberg 2015).

Recent historical research has highlighted the importance of erotic magazines in gay history. Writing about British gay porn magazines in the 1970s, Paul R. Deslandes (2014, 291) argues for the “centrality of pornography to post-1967 gay male culture”. Gay porn magazines combined the pleasure of looking at male bodies with an articulation of a sex positive gay identity and a form of sexual education, while their editor exemplified a new breed of “self-confidently gay” entrepreneur (Deslandes 2014, 268). In his study of the emergence of the gay market in the pre-Stonewall USA, David K. Johnson (2019) shows how physique magazines enabled readers to imagine themselves as part of a gay community and how their publishers worked against censorship and discrimination. Johnson criticizes historical research for upholding an opposition between commercial and political forms of gay culture, arguing that the “creation of the gay market, by and for gay people, was crucial to the emergence and success of the gay movement” (Johnson 2019, x).

Taking cue from Johnson, this article explores the relationship between consumerism, porn and gay politics in *Mosse*. To introduce a new type of magazine, Lehtimiehet needed to craft out a market (cf. Sender 2003, 332), thus helping to introduce the notion of pink economy – addressing gay people as a distinct market segment – in Finland. Exploring this process, we ask what rhetorical means *Mosse* deployed in addressing its readers as a sexual public, how it balanced porn and editorial content, and how it situated Finland (and, consequently, its readers) in the 1980s geopolitical imaginary. Our interests lie on the tensions between gay rights – and the politics connected to them – and the commercial, international gay lifestyle

that *Mosse* promoted. Since the short-lived *Mosse* was no success story, we equally inquire after the reasons of its failure. Throughout, we argue for the value of including pornography in historical research on the formation of sexual cultures, publics, and the vocabularies concerning them. By examining *Mosse*, and the horizon of imagination that gave rise to it, we contribute to existing knowledge on Finnish print history and sexual politics of the 1980s where pornography has, to date, played a marginal role at best.

Today, *Mosse* – much like its competitor, *Adonis* – is virtually forgotten and excluded from Finnish LGBTQI+ historiography (e.g. Mustola & Pakkanen 2007; see however Hulivilipoika 2017).¹ Homosexuality was decriminalized in Finland in 1971, and the public encouragement of homosexuality was only decriminalized in 1999, which concretely affected ways of addressing homosexuality in the media. The public service Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE), for instance, exercised vigilant self-censorship, shelving radio and television programmes addressing homosexuality in the 1960s and 1970s – even ones produced by the company itself (Mustola 2007a, 238–241; Pirttijärvi 2011, 53–54). While there was limited room for gay issues in so-called legitimate media, the encouragement ban did not stop porn magazines from publishing gay content. Consequently, sex magazines were an important site for the public introduction and exploration of gay identity, lifestyle and politics in Finland. Although *Mosse*'s attempt at creating a gay public was met with limited success, the magazine remains noteworthy as an early attempt to formulate a commercial gay public.

Although Finnish legislation has since 1919 required for copies of all domestic publications to be archived in designated public depository libraries, this has not guaranteed the survival of all printed heritage. Porn magazines have been especially prone to disappear from the archives by just being stolen. Only one out of the four designated university libraries currently holds copies of *Mosse* – six issues published in 1983 and 1984 – while metadata concerning

the publication is deficient, lacking the end date of publication and only loosely classifying the magazine as a periodical. The last advertisement for *Mosse* that we have found is for issue 4/1985 (published in *Kalle* 4/1985), and this appears to have been the final issue. The four issues of 1985 are nevertheless missing from public archives, and equally unavailable through private and commercial sources. In addition to conducting thematic content analysis of the six available issues of, we contextualise *Mosse* by examining publications directly connected to it: Lehtimiehet company's premier porn magazine *Kalle*, the rivalling *Adonis*, and the Finnish gay organizations' magazines *Seta* (1975–1994) and *96: ysikutonen* ("Ninety-six", 1969–1986).

***Mosse*: porn with a “deeper function”?**

At the time of its publication, *Mosse* was marketed as a sex magazine (*seksilehti*), a flexible category accommodating men's magazines and porn magazines alike. While veering away from explicit displays of oral and anal sex, *Mosse* featured full-frontal nudity, along with more suggestive visual displays, its written content focusing on detailed depictions of sexual desires, fantasies, encounters, and acts. This means that the magazine fell into the broad genre category of pornography, namely material that features explicit depiction of genitalia, that is produced to excite sexual arousal, and that is classified accordingly by its producers, distributors and consumers.

In 1983, Finnish porn legislation remained fairly strict in comparison to Sweden and Denmark, which had decriminalized all pornographic material in 1969 and 1971, respectively. Despite recurrent attempts towards liberalisation, the 1927 obscenity law banning the production, distribution, import and advertising of porn was only repealed in 1998. Interpretations of the law were nevertheless variable, and regulation remained stricter with

audiovisual materials than with print. Porn magazines were widely produced, openly sold in kiosks and groceries nationwide, and the most popular titles reached circulation in tens of thousands. (Paasonen 2009, 587–588, 591; also Paasonen et al. 2015, 404).

The law was ephemeral as to what constitutes obscenity and publishers knowingly pushed the boundaries of what could be displayed. Rautakirja, the hegemonic magazine distributor in the country, profited from selling porn magazines while also exercising power to choose what precisely to put on the shelves: it could, for example, refuse too explicit visual content. In 1981, the Ministry of Justice sued six sex magazines, including the high-profile *Lehtimiehet* titles *Jallu* and *Kalle*, and delimited explicit close-ups of genitalia and displays of sexual acts (Kontula & Kosonen 1994, 265–266.) A 1980s Finnish gay porn magazine then operated in a curious, ambivalent environment where both the production of pornography and the “encouragement” of homosexuality were criminalized, yet, ephemerally defined, seldom resulted in intervention or prosecution.

Lehtimiehet (“Press Men”, 1957–1988) was a major Finnish magazine publisher with a wide portfolio of titles ranging from the scandal and entertainment magazine *Hymy* – that had, at its 1970s peak, a circulation of over a million – to women’s magazines, comics, popular technology, pop music, and sex titles. In addition to *Mosse*, in 1983 *Lehtimiehet* published the popular straight porn magazines *Kalle*, *Jallu*, and *Ratto*. *Mosse*’s editor Juhani Salomaa was manifestly not part of the gay community. He also edited *Kalle* and wrote travelogues of heterosexual adventures abroad as “Kalle-Juhani”. The role of *Mosse*’s gay culture insider was reserved for the pseudonymous “Caesar”, one of its main contributors.

Since *Mosse* was a new kind of magazine in Finland, it took some work to introduce and clarify its concept. A lack of clarity about the intended readership was evident in how *Mosse*

described itself. On the one hand, as a “gay magazine” (*gay-lehti*) and an “entertainment publication for gay folk” (*gay-kansan viihhteellinen julkaisu*), *Mosse* aligned itself with the gay press while nevertheless stressing its entertainment angle as a means of detaching itself from publications by gay rights organizations. On the other hand, *Mosse* was as a “boy magazine that appeals even to a girl” (*poikalehti tytönkin makuun*) and a “sex reader for the hands of the adult man and woman” (*seksilukemisto aikuisen miehen ja naisen käteen*). Here, *Mosse* associated itself with the sex press more broadly, equally trying to address both women and gay men. While the role of sexual content was sometimes downplayed, at other times it was proudly declared that “*Mosse* is a sex magazine. That is the brave truth we don’t even want to deny.” (1/1984)

The intended readership was especially unclear in the first issues, which featured lesbian pages consisting of content identical with that of most contemporaneous men’s magazines. Consequently, some readers’ letters expressed puzzlement over *Mosse*’s identity:

Firstly, many thanks for *Mosse* magazine, which to my surprise I found in the magazine rack of the village [*kirkonkylän*] supermarket alongside other “respectable” magazines. Daringly, though with considerable consideration, I bought that weird publication like a pig in a bag without knowing the real character of the magazine but IT REALLY WAS A MAGAZINE OF OUR OWN! ...

Why is the lesbian part included? One seriously can’t get a hang of the magazine’s identity. Does it only serve wankers or does it even have a deeper function in supporting and connecting gay folk? Please make a policy difference in relation to Kalle; something clearer than at the moment.

(Pseudonym “Recluse” *Mosse* 2/1983)²

The idea that a magazine could address both gay men and lesbians made no sense to this reader who also distinguished pornographic masturbation fodder from serious social mission. *Mosse* nevertheless tried to bridge this divide. In editorials and responses to reader mail, Salomaa argued that the “new and special” publication was still in the process of finding its identity – the “right *Mosse*-like style” (1/1984). After a few exploratory issues, *Mosse* settled to its male-oriented format, giving up lesbian material altogether. By the fourth issue, its identity was described as “stable”. Combining entertainment (“the mighty secrets of beautiful boys”) with more serious topics, *Mosse* promised to cover the situation of homosexuals in Finland and abroad, and to make demands for improving their conditions. An ethos of gay rights was thus essential to *Mosse*’s budding editorial style, or mission. *Mosse* portrayed itself as a pioneer: “Many and diverse sex magazines are published but you won’t find another entertainment magazine like *Mosse* in our country. We are breaking a new path.” (2/1984)

Mosse’s contents fell broadly into two categories: porn and the coverage of gay issues. Nude photos of men were mostly sourced from international agencies, even though, in the first issue, the models were “camouflaged” as locals by simply giving them Finnish names. This inspired some criticism from readers who saw through the charade (2/1983), after which the practice stopped. Most photos featured white European men, although fetishizing tropes were also in use in connection with men of colour, as in the spread titled, “Watch out, white man!”, imagining a black man avenging the history of slavery with his “big and hard” weapon (1/1983; cf. Deslandes 2014, 276–277). *Mosse* also solicited local models for nude photos, some of which were published and which stand out in their overall amateurish aesthetics.

Erotic stories were published under the banner, “Men narrate, men love” (*Miehet kertovat, miehet rakastavat*), a play on the slogan “The nation fought – men narrate” of *Kansa taisteli*

(*The Nation Fought*, 1954–1986), a well-known magazine chronicling soldiers' memories of the 1939–1944 wars between Finland and the Soviet Union. *Mosse*'s stories drew on generic tropes such as sex in homosocial places like the army, sex with exotic foreign men, and first-time experiences, often with older men or relatives. The magazine also featured humorous material, as in a Christmas porn story about Santa Claus and an elf illustrated with photos of appropriately costumed, yet disrobed, men in a sauna (4/1984).

In addition to featuring pornographic content, *Mosse* covered a variety of issues relating to gay rights and culture and, eventually, to AIDS and safe sex (3/1984). Articles on international developments were regularly published under the banner, "So for others, when for us?" (*Näin muilla, milloin meillä?*), setting up unfavourable comparisons between Finland and the rest of the world. In its first issue, *Mosse* covered Swedish gay radio stations (no such thing existed in Finland), the thriving gay culture of California, and a Parisian priest who had wed same-sex couples. The recurring column, "Gay close by – Gay far away" (*Gay läheltä – Gay kaukaa*), offered several pages of short news items procured from the international press. Gay rights issues were covered for example in an extensive article, "History of gay liberation" (2/1984), and in reports from the gay liberation week in Stockholm (2/1983; 3/1984). *Mosse*'s writers travelled in Sweden and Denmark, which were presented as far more advanced than Finland: as one headline put it, Stockholm was the "gay paradise" (*Tukholma – homojen paratiisi*, 2/1983).

In its focus on international reporting, *Mosse* resembled Swedish gay magazines (see Rosqvist & Andersson 2016, 37) but also *Kalle* (1973–2015), whose heterosexual travel stories Laura Saarenmaa (2017, 37) has analysed as "geographical and sexual maps" educating Finnish readers in the desirability of things and in understanding their own position in the world. Through international comparisons, *Mosse* created an impression of Finland as lagging

behind the Western hubs of the gay world. For their part, *Mosse*'s depictions of Eastern Europe helped to align Finland – despite its shortcomings and ambiguous geopolitical location – with the West (cf. Saarenmaa 2017, 46). A “shocking report” from Warsaw described an encounter with a Polish man ending in homophobic street violence, while a melancholy article on Leningrad pondered why the ideals of an equal socialist society failed to extend to homosexuals (2/1984; 4/1984). While *Mosse* represented Finland as a backwater of sorts, it was still depicted as advanced in comparison to socialist countries.

From *Kalle*'s gay pages to *Mosse*

Although *Mosse* was the first Finnish porn magazine to primarily address men sexually attracted to men, *Lehtimiehet* had published on gay topics since the 1960s. In her study of post-war gay life in Finland, Tuula Juvonen points out that both men's magazines and scandal magazines played a key role in addressing homosexuality at a time when the topic was otherwise largely invisible in the public. While 1950s men's and scandal magazines discussed homosexuality in a lurid vein, in the 1960s *Hymy*, despite its penchant for scandal, offered room for gay men and lesbians' points of view and critiques of the current legislation. (Juvonen 2002, 105–116.). Since the mid-1970s, other *Lehtimiehet* magazines featured full-frontal male nudity: *Ratto* (“*Pleasure*”) “undressed the men of Finland” while *Nyrkkiposti* (“*Fist Mail*”) displayed “men of the world” and *Kalle* curated “the most beautiful men of the North”. These were all offered “specifically for women”, while obviously adding to the magazines' potential gay allure. Similarly, some Swedish primarily straight sex magazines published nude photos of men in the 1950s and 1960s, before the breakthrough of the gay press. As one publisher noted, they would pretend that the images of men were published for women, when in fact they were intended for gay men. (Arnberg 2010, 108, 167.) *Kalle* subsequently took a more straightforward approach by publishing material for gay readers in

every issue since 1977, creating both a loyal gay readership and a template that *Mosse* would later try to follow.

Kalle was launched as a raunchy alternative to existing magazines in 1973 when interpretations of the obscenity legislation were, following a governmental memorandum on the freedom of press, loosened to allow for more explicit displays (Saarenmaa 2017, 38). In 1977, *Kalle* introduced a monthly column titled “Man to man” (*Mies miehelle*), emphasizing that it addressed not only “‘those’ kinds of boys”, but even “‘normal’ readers”, whom it could help to understand the diversity of love (1/1977). Initially, the “Man to man” column featured the thoughts of an “aging” (30 to 40 years old) urban gay man who led a cultured and well-travelled life, pined romantically after beautiful young men and complained about the quality of local gay life in comparison to Copenhagen or Amsterdam. The column soon gained a more pornographic tone, expanding to articles and travel reportages. *Kalle* also added a section on “Gay News” from around the world (9/1977) and introduced the English word “gay” to describe “open, happy, guilt free” homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals in an article about San Francisco (7/1977). Within a year, *Kalle* went from promising to educate heterosexual readers on homosexuality to proclaiming, “Kalle is a part of the revolution of the gay movement, breaking prejudices, demanding equality!” (10/1977), quickly adopting the language of the gay liberation movement and introducing it in the context of a (primarily straight) hardcore sex magazine.

During *Mosse*’s run between 1983 and 1985, *Kalle*’s gay pages featured sexual imagery ranging from erections to masturbation, blow jobs, rimming and anal intercourse, although without any close-ups of genitals. Typically, the most explicit images of sex between men were produced in-house, although internationally sourced photos were also included.³ Erotic stories, a key feature in Finnish porn magazines (see Saarenmaa 2017), dwelled on detailed

descriptions of sex between men. In 1984, *Kalle* launched an article series chronicling gay life in various Finnish cities, tied in with local meetings designed to boost gay social activities. The abundance of gay content in *Kalle* seems surprising considering that Finnish heterosexual masculinity was, from the 1950s onwards, very much defined against homosexuality, as popularly associated with Swedish men and the effeminate masculinity that they were seen to embody (see Juvonen 2002, 140–143, 155–156). The importance of gay readership was particularly evident in *Kalle*'s personal ads: in the 1980s, ads where men looked for male sexual or romantic partners far outnumbered all others. *Kalle* also regularly featured gay topics (although not images) on its cover, suggesting of the commercial importance of non-straight readers. Since the existence of a gay market had been tried and tested, *Lehtimiehet* then experimented with a new magazine catering to it.

As a kind of spinoff to *Kalle*'s gay pages, *Mosse* was largely made by the same people (editor Salomaa and the pseudonymous "Caesar"), it adopted similar content (e.g., articles on gay life in Finnish towns) and advertised the same gay package tours to Mykonos. These ties were further strengthened through horizontal promotion: the back cover of every available issue of *Mosse* featured an advertisement for *Kalle*, which ran regular advertisements for *Mosse*. *Kalle*'s readership was also used to gauge *Mosse*'s commercial viability: a two-page ad in *Kalle* (2/1984) with the headline, "Now we'll see if Mosse has balls!" enquired whether the country needed a "boy magazine such as Mosse". Readers could fill in a form stating whether they were interested in an annual subscription to *Mosse*, whether they wanted to pre-order the next issue, or whether they were not interested at all. *Kalle*'s advertisements encouraged readers: "Be brave and buy your own Mosse. You'll be surprised! Thousands and thousands of brave friends of sex do it!" (*Kalle* 11/1983) Later, *Kalle* (12/1984) advertised the possibility of ordering *Mosse* by phone, with the magazine arriving in a discreet envelope without attracting attention. The emphasis on bravery displayed by purchasing *Mosse*, on the

one hand, and the possibility of inconspicuous consumption, on the other, shows that the publisher assumed potential buyers to be hesitant buying a magazine that might label them as gay.

Mosse's arrival did not diminish the amount of gay content published in *Kalle*. Lehtimiehet was not looking to move its gay readers to *Mosse* and, wanting to keep them both, factually rendered them rivalling publications. One drawback for *Mosse* was that, as a quarterly, its publishing tempo was too slow for personals: in contrast, *Kalle* was a monthly. While *Mosse* built on *Kalle*, it could not take over this communicative function, aiming to be a different, specifically gay magazine with a broader focus instead.

Addressing a gay public

Kalle's used the English word *gay* to identify content aimed at homosexual men. In searching for ways to address and identify its public, *Mosse* experimented with a range of terms. The ubiquitous *gay* was sometimes rephrased as the more communal *gay-kansa* (gay folk), and the word *homo* was also in common use. In addition, *Mosse*'s terminology ranged from the early, awkward *homoseksualisti* (homosexualist) all the way to *hintti* (fag). This range indicates that there was no obvious model or vocabulary for addressing a gay public.

Mosse was not alone in its search for terms for addressing a gay public. The 1983 volume of *96*, published by gay organization Psyke, similarly used a variety of terms: *homoseksuaali* (homosexual as noun), *gay* (occasionally with Finnish spelling *gei*), *homo*, *hintti* and even the occasional *homofiili* (homophile). An article about post-Franco era Spain, for example, talked about "fag organizations" (*hinttijärjestöt*) (1/1983). Reflecting on the matter, *96* noted that *hintti* had been popularized as a proud equivalent of the English term gay when homosexual

acts were decriminalized and as gay organizations and club nights emerged. While, at first, *hintti* seemed free of the oppressive history of *homo*, it had gradually come to signify effeminacy (“*siskon synonyymi*”) and was being replaced by the word *homo*. “Now it seems that the ordinary Finnish man of our kind is a homo and not a fag”, 96 concluded: “Decent, fair, calm, with a direct gaze, sporty or likes sportsmen, smelling of clean sweat, sometimes with a beer mug in his hand, a country boy or a city lad, a guy who likes a guy: that’s a vigorous homo boy, not a faggot!” (1/1983) As 96 outlined a history of reclaiming pejorative words for describing attractive gay masculinity, *Mosse*’s varying terminology participated in the same semantic quest for acceptable vocabulary.

Throughout the six issues analysed in this article, *Mosse* made explicit, recurrent attempts to build a readership through emotional rhetoric and references to a gay community under construction. It deployed direct forms of address in an attempt to “hail” readers as community members and to solicit feedback and content from them:

So I ask... no *demand, pray and beg* you to share your opinion about the magazine.

This way we can build a magazine that is close to your hearts, dear readers.

And what else? In addition to you airing your opinions, we need other kinds of help.

Interviews, travel stories etc. Because we want to tell about the fag’s (*hintin*) life across our dear land of birth, we need your story, an ordinary fag boy in the countryside, in town, wherever. (1/1984, italics added)

Mosse portrayed itself as a shared project between its creators and readers, as exemplified by Salomaa’s poetic response to a reader’s letter:

Small is the effect of my voice, dear friend. I am the maker of the magazine and responsible for it in the eyes of the law and people, but you, readers and buyers of the magazine, are responsible for *Mosse*'s future. The more people that dare – even with a snicker – to the village kiosk to fetch *Mosse*, the more certain is the publication of the next *Mosse*. (1/1984)

Salomaa figures the assumed reader as a timid male inhabitant of a small town, or village, who needs to take heart and ensure *Mosse*'s future publication by buying a copy. Contra the image of closeted rural life, *Mosse* positions itself as a site of communality and outness requiring collective effort to exist. In shifting responsibility over *Mosse*'s future publishing to its readers, Salomaa (3/1984) made further use of emotional, florid forms of address:

It does not matter if the editorial office sings with the grace of sirens tempting Ulysses unless Ulysses' ears do not hear this call. Therefore – if you like *Mosse* and want it to live – You must admit to being brave enough to fetch yours from a kiosk or a newsstand or order it home as a discrete delivery. It's no use hawking in second-hand bookshop for the odd chance that someone would sell their copy There (sic) and you could then buy it there. *Mosse* doesn't prosper in the backroom of a second-hand shop amidst hardcore porn. It needs sun.

Salomaa sought to associate *Mosse* with outness, distinguishing it from illicit backroom pornography. With a direct, intimate form of address – “You” – the editor wanted readers to recognize both themselves and their responsibility, thus rhetorically shifting over the burden of *Mosse*'s survival. In return, *Mosse* emphasized its commitment to the wellbeing of Finnish gay male community: “*Mosse*'s theme in every issue is uniform and the theme is you (...) It's you who are the most important in this land and your wellbeing, the wellbeing of gays”

(4/1984). Highlighting the magazine's commitment to its readership, *Mosse*'s promotional efforts attempted to forge an organic link between its financial success and the prosperity of Finnish gay culture.

Envisioning the gay consumer

As the first commercially published gay magazine in the country, *Mosse* was in the vanguard of introducing the explicit notion of a gay consumer in the Finnish cultural sphere. Writing of the new Swedish publication, *Magazin Gay*, *Mosse* self-identified with gay consumers as a group: “*we gay consumers* are such a large *consumer group* that even we need options. Long live the diverse GAY press!” (1/1984, emphasis added) The best examples of gay consumer lifestyle were to be found abroad, as in Sydney's newly found abundance: “a community with its night clubs, gay bars, beaches, lawyers ... a whole chain of gay bars, clubs, fashion stores, antique stores, cafes and grocery stores”. (4/1984)

Envisioning a gay lifestyle in terms of consumption more than sociability or politics, *Mosse* aligned itself with the emergent “pink economy”, whereby primarily middle class gay men – but also other members of sexual minorities with spending power – have become identified as a lucrative consumer target group. As Justin Bengry (2009) notes, pink economy is typically seen as a post-gay liberation phenomenon, embraced by mainstream marketing discourse in the 1990s, although historical research shows businesses targeting queer consumers as early as the first half of the 20th century (see also Johnson 2019). In contrast, the notion of a gay male consumer target group was a novelty in 1980s Finland. Few businesses openly addressed gay customers and while gay rights organizations had set up parties and clubs since the 1960s, the first avowedly gay bar in the country, Gay Gambrini, only opened in 1984 (Montell 2018). *Mosse* used *Magazin Gay* to introduce the novel idea of a gay consumer

group. Noting that Swedish advertisements showed young men in each other's arms, *Mosse* reflected: "The biggest difference in comparison to Finnish magazines is made by Swedish advertisers. In Sweden, homosexuals are considered a marketing target group – with considerable spending power – worth targeting with advertisements. ... Finnish advertisers have not yet found this possibility" (1/1984). Once again, Finland lagged behind its Western neighbour in *Mosse*'s geopolitical and -sexual imagination.

Travel was a key element of this new gay lifestyle (cf. Hilderbrand 2013) and numerous articles in *Mosse* provided tips for gay travellers. Issue 4/1984 alone featured travel tips for Milan, a travel story about Vienna, a look at gay life in mid-size Swedish towns, a reportage about Sydney and a poetic reflection on the city of Leningrad ("like a forbidden paean for a man"). Travelogues providing practical information on European gay venues and hotels were standard in both *Mosse* and *Kalle*, while the Greek island of Mykonos in particular – branded as "gay paradise" and "Euro-Gay Clubpolis" (Waite & Markwell 2006, 115–121) – was established as a favoured location. In addition to advertising package holidays to Mykonos, *Mosse* featured travelogues offering both practical tips and pornographic accounts of sexual encounters on the island. Travelogues and published reader submissions featured photos of naked local men, accompanied by captions such as "Dark Georgios is connected to memories of fantastic nights" (e.g., 1/1983; 3/1984). In a seemingly seamless cycle, editorial content fed fantasies that could encourage readers to participate on the advertised package tours and, subsequently, to produce erotic Mykonos material of their own.

In addition to travel, fashion was key in building a gay lifestyle. Fashion features were published since the very first issue: predictably, the state of Finnish consumer culture was seen as lagging behind in comparison to neighbouring Sweden. Fashion features ranged from

attractive underwear presented in collaboration with the seller (with the slogan, “In Sweden, these are already pop”, 2/1983; 1/1983; 2/1984) to hanky codes (2/1984) and spring fashions:

The Finnish man nowadays dresses in a more and more international vein. Boutiques and department stores have taken into their collections clothes that are of better quality, more timely, and above all, pleasing to the eye and sensuous.

At last! Until now Finland has toddled about a year behind. Now we’re catching up.
(1/1984)

The feature was accompanied by colour photos of street styles in Denmark and Sweden “where spring wear is already on sale”. International comparisons repeated from one article to another as aspirational goals and realms of potential experience to be reached through well-planned holiday trips and thoughtful shopping practices.

Although *Mosse* envisioned a gay consumer lifestyle, as a sex magazine it was not able to attract mainstream advertising. Apart from regular advertisements for *Kalle*, the only ads published in *Mosse* were for a Danish mail order company selling gay films, photos and books. Attracting advertisers to porn magazines in general and to gay porn magazines in particular has been tricky. In the US context, Katherine Sender (2003, 247–248) notes that while magazines such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, addressing straight male readers and considered as relatively “high class”, featured advertising for mainstream consumer brands, porn magazines for women and gay men more likely ran advertisements related to porn and sex toys. The same applies to the Finnish context where straight porn magazines – including Lehtimiehet’s *Kalle*, *Jallu* and *Ratto* – advertised beer, tobacco, wristwatches, c-tapes, and a range of other “manly” consumer products, especially so in the 1970s. *Mosse* and *Adonis*

merely ran ads for porn magazines from their own publishers. In a broader framing, *Mosse's* notion of a gay consumer then had limited currency.

Tensions with gay activists

Mosse's relationship to Finnish gay organizations was complex. Two organizations were active in Finland in the 1980s: Psyke, established in 1968, had been instrumental in building the Finnish gay and lesbian community through organizing dances and publishing *96*, which featured a popular section for contact ads. Seta (short for “seksuaalinen tasavertaisuus”, sexual equality) was founded in 1974 by young men who were dissatisfied with what they saw as Psyke's lack of political engagement and soon became the leading advocate for gay rights in the country (Mustola 2007b, 23–27.) Psyke's *96* gave *Mosse* a favourable welcome, writing that it was “worth getting acquainted with” (3/1983) and publishing a bank giro form that could be used to order *Mosse*. However, *Mosse's* mainstream publisher, its pornographic content, as well as its attempts to envision gay consumer identity all set it in tension with Seta's ideals.

The first issue of *Mosse* included an article on both Seta and Psyke, and the second issue featured notifications from Seta, but relations soon grew antagonistic. *Mosse* (1/1984) complained that the library at Seta's Helsinki office did not carry *Mosse* among international gay periodicals, despite of it having been delivered. *Mosse* claimed that *Seta* reserved itself the right to represent homosexuals in Finland and branded everyone else as “porn peddlers and money-hungry exploiters”. Complaining that it had been accused of commercialism and for exploiting lonely people, *Mosse* retorted that everyone was “free to buy the product he needs,” (2/1984), framing gay freedom in terms of consumption. For its part, *Seta* (2–3/1984) complained that *Mosse* had wilfully ignored their club in its listing of Helsinki gay discos.

Seta was committed to a “politics of respectability” (Johnson 2019, 217). Predictably, *Mosse*’s vision of overtly sexual and consumerist gay culture was at odds with Seta’s mission to provide the wider society factual information concerning homosexuality. While *Seta* magazine began to focus more on gay and lesbian identity and culture in the 1980s, it was critical of consumerism’s negative impact. (Pirttijärvi 2011, 41–45, 71–72.) The antagonistic relations between *Seta* and *Mosse* resemble developments in Sweden, UK and the US where left-wing gay activists have similarly critiqued presumably frivolous or purely commercially motivated publications catering to men’s interest in enjoying nude images of men (see Deslandes 2014, 285–286; Johnson 2019, 182–184; Rosqvist & Arnberg 2015, 764).

Tensions between *Mosse* and Seta escalated as *Seta* (2–3/1984) published an anonymous exposé on Caesar, aka Pär Lundin, and his collaboration with Lehtimiehet. According to *Seta*, Lundin’s company Club Diana, which started by organising gay disco nights in Helsinki in the early 1970s, was illegally importing and selling porn magazines and videos, and Lundin had taken nude photos of underage models. Club Diana operated a helpline for gay people and *Seta* insinuated that young callers received a particularly warm welcome. In addition, *Seta* raised concerns that Lundin had wrongfully gotten hold of the contact information of “hundreds if not thousands” of homosexuals, thus painting a lurid scene of illegal porn trade and potential sexual exploitation of minors. *Seta*’s exposé also cast suspicion on Psyke, as the article named Lundin as the sometime editor of 96.

In 1984, Seta invited *Mosse*’s editor Salomaa to a debate on “Pornography – commercialism”. In its report on the event, *Seta* (5/1984) emphasised the negative aspects of pornography, such as poor artistic quality, the promotion of prejudice and violence against homosexuals. For his part, Salomaa noted that the discussion had been factual, not as heated as he had anticipated,

and that he had “not been branded as completely immoral” despite representing commercial entertainment (*Mosse* 4/1984). While *Mosse* defended and promoted commercial sexual entertainment, the magazine justified itself by arguing to offer more than just that. When the competing gay magazine *Adonis* was launched, *Mosse* (4/1984) criticized it for being a pure money-grab: “*Mosse* has at least aimed to offer friends value for money – namely that so-called commercial entertainment combined with information.” In the context of 1980s Finnish gay culture, it would have been difficult to successfully defend just porn, especially if one was – similarly to the editors of both *Mosse* and *Adonis* – a straight man not personally invested in gay identity politics.

Mosse's failure

One obvious reason for *Mosse's* commercial failure, as suggested by Timo Korppi (2002, 127), the editor of the rivalling *Adonis*, is that men were reluctant to buy an explicitly gay porn magazine out of fear of being found out. This would be why *Kalle*, with its gay content spread among photos of women, survived while *Mosse* and *Adonis* did not. However, other factors equally contributed to *Mosse's* demise: 1980s market for porn magazines was challenging as the introduction of VHS led to diminished sales, there was competition from international gay magazines, and *Lehtimiehet* itself lacked commitment towards the gay community.

In international comparison, *Mosse* was an unusual venture for a mainstream publisher to take on. In Sweden, UK and West Germany, early gay porn magazines were published by companies specialized on the gay market holding other interests beyond commerce (see Arnberg 2010, 200–201, 286–287, 321–325; Deslandes 2014; Rehberg 2016, 475).

Lehtimiehet, in contrast, had no special expertise, or interest in gay culture. If *Mosse* was not

profitable, Lehtimiehet had no motive to keep it alive and support it with income from other sources, as a gay-owned business might have had. As *Mosse* (4/1984) summarized, “when making a magazine, one does not think with the heart but with the wallet”.

The market of Finnish porn magazines had been at its largest in the 1970s when the sales for the market leader, *Jallu*, peaked at 140,000 and other successful Lehtimiehet titles such as *Vip* and *Ratto* could sell more than 80,000 copies each. At its most successful in 1981, *Kalle* sold nearly 70,000 copies, after which its circulation started to drop rapidly by about 10,000 copies per year.⁴ *Mosse* then comes across as an experiment in creating a magazine for a niche public at a time of decreasing sales. Circulation data for *Mosse* is not available but according to a report in *Seta* (5/1984), its print run was around 7,000 copies while *Kalle*’s is correctly identified as being circa 40,000. *Mosse*’s circulation was therefore modest. The small market was reflected in the pricing: in 1985, an issue of *Mosse* cost 35 Finnish Marks, *Kalle* only 20. Since the magazines were in direct competition, *Mosse* was not viable in the long term.

Lehtimiehet had the benefit of a good distribution network through Rautakirja. It could put a gay porn magazine into the shelves of kiosks and groceries throughout the country, small towns included. In comparison, *96*, which featured materials comparable to *Mosse*, was published by a small non-profit organization, had low production values and no access to mainstream commercial distribution. The gay consumers envisioned in *Mosse* nevertheless failed to materialize in sufficient numbers to keep the magazine afloat. While the Swedish *Revolt Press*, for example, sold more copies abroad than in Sweden (Arnberg 2010, 287n7), *Mosse* was confined to the small, linguistically defined domestic market. At the same time, adverts in contemporary porn magazines show that international gay magazines were available in Finland through mail order and specialized sellers. Aware of its market competition, *Mosse* (3/1984) emphasized its lower price and cited (possibly fabricated)

readers' letters applauding its quality: "As I compare *Mosse* to international gay products, I can only wonder as to its extraordinarily tidy and showy appearance, clear, gorgeous images and juicy text. Most international magazines can even feel ashamed in comparison to *Mosse*." (1/1984)

The very name of *Mosse* in fact points to an obvious dilemma regarding its imagined audience. As mentioned above, *Mosse* took its name from Raimo Jääskeläinen, known nationwide as Monsieur Mosse, or just Mosse. Born in 1932 and made famous in numerous *Lehtimiehet* exposés as both their subject and author since the 1960s, Jääskeläinen was a notoriously campy celebrity with whom the younger generation of gay men did not necessarily wish to be identified with. At the same time, he remained the virtually only out gay male celebrity in the country, and his name was immediately recognizable (Touko Laaksonen, aka Tom of Finland, only gained nationwide recognition towards the end of the 1990s; see Kalha 2012; Rossi 2019).

Salomaa opened his first editorial with "This magazine is called *Mosse* and it has nothing to do with that one person. This does not include scandals. This does not even try to be a scandal magazine." (1/1983) *Mosse* was then paradoxically named after a gay figure from whom it wished to distinguish itself. Mentions of Jääskeläinen were scarce yet acidic: he was, for example, referred to as an "ageing 'nancy boy'" whose "gossip is of more interest to these straight people than to *Mosse*'s readership" (3/1984). *Lehtimiehet* had been instrumental in making Monsieur Mosse famous through regular interviews and his own editorial input but relations cooled and, by 1983, he was an abject figure for the company's gay porn magazine. Effeminate, ageing, gossipy and scandalous, Jääskeläinen was incompatible with the contemporary internationally-minded, fashion-conscious gay culture that *Mosse* envisioned, just as he was off-synch with the generation of gay activists.

The magazine was stuck with its chosen name, even as it tried to alter its connotations. In the editorial to issue 2/1984, Salomaa addressed his readers as “Mosse-people”: “this is how, friends, you can already be called”. The moniker did not stick and the magazine’s complex relationship with its namesake points to contradictions involved in a mainstream publisher like Lehtimiehet publishing a gay magazine: in choosing the name, the company fell back to what it knew – Monsieur Mosse, the scandal magazine celebrity. The name – while recognisable – failed to match the magazine’s brand-building activities as a companion to confident, internationally oriented, and socially conscious gay men.

Conclusion

While research on gay history in Finland has paid little attention to *Mosse* or its precedent *Kalle*, our analysis shows that they participated in introducing the themes of gay liberation and gay consumer culture in the Finnish public sphere. *Kalle* was among the most successful “straight” porn magazines in the country when adopting, or appropriating, the language of the gay movement in the late 1970s. *Mosse* expanded on *Kalle*’s coverage of gay issues, combining social rights topics with lifestyle features and pornography. Despite its modest circulation and short lifespan, *Mosse* contributed to introducing the idea of gay consumer culture in Finland. Its very existence is significant as a sign that it was possible to imagine a Finnish gay consumer market in the first part of the 1980s. *Mosse*’s short life span shows, however, that Lehtimiehet overestimated the potential of the gay consumer market. The magazine was not able to attract enough readers and it was clearly not successful in selling advertising space. In other words, the imagined gay market of *Mosse* failed in terms of both its consumer base and the interests of advertisers to be associated with the publication.

Mosse's style of combining erotic material with gay lifestyle and news followed international models (see Deslandes 2014; Johnson 2019, 176–185). Less typically, *Mosse* was created by a mainstream magazine publishing company and not, like early gay erotic magazines in many other countries, by gay entrepreneurs (see Deslandes 2014; Johnson 2019). *Mosse*'s existence shows that Lehtimiehet saw gay consumers as a potentially lucrative market. However, although Seta critiqued porn publishers of commercialism, gay porn was not always profitable. Possibilities for selling advertising space were limited and the national market was simply too small – and some of the potential readers probably too closeted – for a specialized gay porn publication to thrive. *Mosse* remains a curious incident in the history of both Finnish media history and Nordic gay media. Through studying it, we can better understand the mundane sexual politics of commercial Finnish media history, as well as the inner tensions and different horizons of imagination concerning gay male culture in the country before the “encouragement ban” was lifted.

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¹ In this article, we focus on *Mosse*, because it was the earliest Finnish sex magazine addressing a primarily gay male audience; it published wider and more varied editorial content than *Adonis*, which relied largely on internationally sourced images; and because *Mosse*’s mainstream publisher makes it an unusual case in international comparison.

² All translations are by the authors.

³ The most explicit images of sex acts typically accompanied articles about gay life in different Finnish towns. They often seemed to be taken at somebody’s home and sometimes the models hid their faces behind and issue of *Kalle* or a local newspaper (e.g. *Kalle* 3/1984, 4/1984) which served as proof of the models being local amateurs. Caesar regularly advertised for models in *Kalle*.

⁴ Circulation data provided by MediaAuditFinland. Email from Emma Syyrakki, 20 June 2018. With thanks to Laura Saarenmaa.