

Monsieur Mosse: A Bad Gay?

Queer Celebrity in Finnish Print Media,
from the 1960s to the 1980s

ABSTRACT

Raimo Jääskeläinen, better known as Monsieur Mosse (1932–1992), was a hairdresser, makeup artist, gossip columnist, convicted blackmailer, and Finland’s first out gay male celebrity. The topic of endless articles, befriending and falling out with beauty queens and fashion models, publishing a tell-all memoir elaborating on his taste for luxury, working for straight porn magazines and briefly editing one, Mosse was both the subject and object of popular media and, in his flamboyance, a key domestic celebrity figure of the 1970s and 1980s. Meanwhile, his relationship with the gay rights movement was frictional at best in that his brand was considered “dishonorable” vis-à-vis liberatory politics. Building on media historical inquiry and taking cue from Huw Lemmey and Ben Miller’s (2022) popular argument for studying “bad gays” – historical figures not fitting aspirational and inspirational narratives of queer activism and agency – this article examines Mosse’s trajectory as a celebrity, focusing especially on his 1980s collaborations with the sex press. We argue that Mosse’s particular brand of shameless extravagance and candid gossiping knowingly operationalized “badness” as a vehicle of distinction and visibility in a largely homophobic national context.

Keywords: gay celebrity, gossip, porn magazines, sexual outness, Finland

RAIMO JÄÄSKELÄINEN (1932–1992), better known as Monsieur Mosse or just Mosse, was a flamboyant celebrity hairdresser and makeup artist, catty gossipier, convicted blackmailer, close friend to beauty queens

and models, and the first out gay male celebrity in Finland (Juvonen 2001). Jääskeläinen first entered public consciousness as a hairdresser and makeup artist. His early career, starting in 1956, included assisting roles and later walk-in parts in film productions; makeup work for commercial television; and the nominal role of editor in chief for *Madame* (1962–1965), an independent gossip magazine launched by Tabe Slioor, the country’s uncrowned queen of the scandalous kiss and tell (Saarenmaa 2010, 119). The first part of his “artist name,” Monsieur Mosse, resulted from a combination of French glamour and coiffure artistry (it was common 1960s practice to identify high-end Finnish male hairdressers as “monsieur”). The origins of “Mosse” are opaquer: according to one account, Jääskeläinen got the nickname as he drove a Soviet-built Moskvitsh car (familiarily referred to as a “Mosse”) when working as an assistant on film productions (Hytönen 1999, 84). Mosse was also the name of his bit character in the 1964 film *Laukaus Kyproksessa* (“Shot in Cyprus”). Opening his popular Helsinki-based salon in 1964, Mosse gradually moved from supporting roles to bona fide media celebrity status, aided by his extensive personal connections among Finnish celebrities. He discovered models and beauty queens and, as Tuula Juvonen (2001, 209) notes, “bought houses with golden toilet seats, American cars and long fur coats, and [...] threw wild parties, all of which was duly reported in the women’s magazines.” After the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1971, Mosse came out in an interview in *Hymy*, the most popular monthly magazine in the country.

Although Monsieur Mosse has been recognized as a key figure in Finnish gay history (e.g. Juvonen 2007; Hulivilipoika 2014), there is little research on him beyond short biographical sketches (Juvonen 2001). It was exceptional for an out gay man to reach such visible mainstream presence in 1970s and 1980s Finland. We suggest that exploring Mosse’s once pronounced celebrity status helps to better understand the positioning of male homosexuality within Finnish popular publics, spanning from the decriminalization of homosexuality to the HIV crisis of the following decade. Mosse’s celebrity developed within popular media of low cultural status: entertainment and sex magazines. Study-

ing Mosse's public career, we ask how a gay celebrity found room in periodicals mostly (although not exclusively) addressing straight audiences. What kind of celebrity persona did Mosse cultivate and what uses did he serve for the print industry? We start our discussion in the mid-1960s when Mosse first gained fame, but focus especially on his 1980s career when he moved from the pages of the scandal press to those of porn magazines.

While Mosse's celebrity spanned different media, his fame grew primarily through entertainment magazines. Consequently, we build on print media historical inquiry to study his celebrity career. We have collected material about Monsieur Mosse by systematically going through the print copies of the magazines he was most closely associated with: *Hymy* (years 1965–1977) and *Ratto* (1973–1980) published by Lehtimiehet company, and *Erotica* (1982–1984) and *Gentleman* (1983) by the publisher Erotica. Alongside these, we include Mosse's autobiography and gossip book (Mosse 1981, 1983), published by Lehtimiehet and Erotica, respectively. Additional contextual understanding was gained from going through the volumes of selected scandal, porn, and gay magazines.¹ We have further searched for articles about Monsieur Mosse in the digital archive of the National Library of Finland (digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi) and the digital archive of the leading national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (all dates).² In analyzing the material, we focus on both media production and content, and attend to all Monsieur Mosse's appearances throughout. In terms of production, we trace how his relationship with magazine publishers developed and the kind of work he did for them. In terms of content, we focus on Mosse's persona as it developed in his magazine appearances as interviewee, editor, and writer.

Recent media historical research has considered how magazines primarily addressing straight audiences, sex magazines included, have also provided fora for queer interests. In Finland, Juvonen has shown that men's magazines and scandal magazines offered room for discussing homosexuality in the 1950s and 1960s, when the topic was not considered suitable within more respectable media (Juvonen 2002, 105–116).

More recently, Jens Rydström (2022) has described how “straight” Swedish porn magazines *Piff*, *Raff*, and *Paff* published male nudes, featured content about gay and trans experience, and provided opportunities to meet through personal ads from the 1950s to the late 1970s, when interest in these topics fell due to the growth of both gay press and the anti-pornographic women’s movement. Similarly, Signe Bremer (2023) and Cassius Adair (2023) have examined how straight porn magazines offered support for trans audiences in 1960s Sweden and in the US from the 1970s throughout the 1990s, respectively. This research has emphasized the positive potential of sex magazines; as the distribution of print media enabled access to information outside cities and local subcultures, porn magazines could provide, in Adair’s (2023, 55) phrasing, an “unlikely safe haven for the circulation of alternative gender knowledge”.

Monsieur Mosse’s career in mainstream porn magazines provides another example of queer expression in primarily straight places, even though his brand of celebrity was hardly oriented towards community building. Rather, following Huw Lemmey and Ben Miller (2022), Mosse could be described as a “bad gay”. This framing of “badness” is not a reflection of a pejorative or judgmental approach to a historical persona, but rather a response to Lemmey and Miller’s call for acknowledging historical figures who have been deemed morally suspect and who do not fit inspirational narratives of queer activism and agency. As Lemmey and Miller suggest, examining such characters helps to paint a fuller picture of queer pasts, shifting and conflicting understandings of sexuality, and the sexual lives and public presences that have been possible within them. As we discuss below, with his propensity for catty gossip, love of luxury, and willingness to out other gay men, Monsieur Mosse cultivated a kind of “bad gay” persona that was at odds with both respectable Finnish cultural norms and the gay rights movement of the era. At the same time, it was this persona that very much enabled and fueled his celebrity. In order to account for how this occurred, we continue to discuss the key elements of Mosse’s “bad gay” persona: porn, gossip, and camp.

A dishonorable gay?

At the beginning of his celebrity career, Mosse collaborated with the Lehtimiehet company, which published magazines in diverse genres, from women's magazines to scandal gossip, pop music fandom, and, from the 1970s, hardcore pornography. He cultivated a specifically close relationship with Lehtimiehet's increasingly scandal-infused monthly *Hymy*, which grew into the most popular magazine in the country. He made regular appearances on the periodical's pages from 1965, when he was introduced to its readers as a beauty specialist who had worked with Josephine Baker and Juliette Greco, "dared to tell Jayne Mansfield that her makeup was horrendous", and was favored by the best-known women in the country (issue 1/1965), so as to boost the visibility of his new business (Figure 1). This framing of glamorous international connections, jet-set aspirations, and beauty professionalism grew key to Mosse's public self-fashioning. In 1967, he was *Hymy's* press representative at the Miss Finland pageant. "As Monsieur Mosse stepped into the



Figure 1. "He is Monsieur Mosse Himself." *Hymy* 1/1965.

studio, there was a small stir among the press and the organizers”, the magazine wrote: “Mosse is a renowned expert of female beauty while also being known for his frankness”. In the following pages, Mosse assessed the candidates’ bodies and hairstyles with the kind of bluntness already expected of him, criticizing everything from their lack of personality to their poor postures, failed hairdos, dissatisfactory thighs and noses (issue 2/1967).

As homosexuality was decriminalized in Finland, Mosse came out in a three-part *Hymy* feature, “Monsieur Mosse only Loves a Man,” advertised as the fully open memoirs of Mosse and his friends; the series also covered his “gay wedding” in Amsterdam with the younger Pepe Kurillo (issues 5–7/1971). It should be noted that Mosse’s gayness was not exactly a revelation at this point, *Hymy* having already published a two-part article, “Two Divas, Tabe and Mosse”, detailing their friendship and falling out, the marker of “diva” implying that Mosse’s gayness was a public secret (*Hymy* 12/1970, 1/1971). It seems likely that his official coming out was merely kept on hold until the law changed.

To provide material for a whole series of interviews, Mosse was, however, willing to out not only himself but also other gay men. The memoirs’ third and last instalment, titled “My Society is Famous and Large”, was published in visibly redacted form (Figure 2), with several names blacked out. In this instalment, Mosse discussed his views on various beauty queens and sham marriages of gay men working in fashion. It was soon discovered that Mosse (and Kurillo as his aide) had been sued for attempting to blackmail “head waiter X” with threats of outing him on the pages of *Hymy* (other men, unwilling to sue, had received similar threats) (*Viikkosanomat* 25/1971; *Helsingin Sanomat* 6.10.1971). At the end of the legal process, Mosse was sentenced to three months’ probation and fines (*Helsingin Sanomat* 23.4.1974). While the trial was ongoing, he gained further notoriety by planning to self-publish an exposé listing “360 names of abnormal individuals” (*Viikkosanomat* 32/1971) and allegedly threatening a key witness with a beating (*Nyrkkiposti* 3/1972). Mosse’s much cherished outness made him a national exception and, as the blackmail episode indicates, he was ready to use this new-

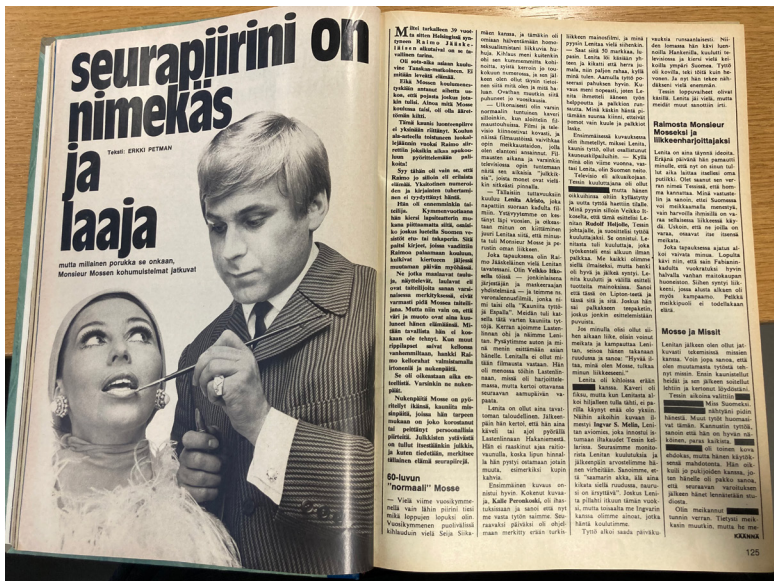


Figure 2. Third, redacted part of Mosses's memoirs, Hymy 7/1971

found public position to his own financial gain at the direct expense of closeted gay men, suggesting that solidarity was not his particular forte. The incident lent further infamy to his public image as a gossipier with a disregard for the privacy of others.

Mosses's attempts to out other gay men were not framed as a strategy of gay liberation aimed at openness (cf. Gross 1991), but rather appeared as purely a means to provide salacious material for a scandal/entertainment magazine. Unsurprisingly, Mosses's relationship with the gay rights movement was frictional at best. The fact that he remained the best-known – and with the exception of the actor Tarmo Manni, who was much more of a high-brow figure (Tihinen 2022), the only – known gay male celebrity in 1970s Finland, posed a specific challenge, given his loud persona and lack of interest in rights-based liberation work, as advanced by the organizations Psyke (established in 1968) and Seta (established in 1974). While Mosses was of the same generation as many of Psyke's and Seta's activists, his courting of wealthy generals and

right-wing industrialists, as well as his manifest love of good life and beautiful people, marked him as the opposite of progressive. Meanwhile, his overt campness, as expressed in jokey self-comparisons to Liberace, together with his ties to lowbrow scandal (and later sex) press came across as not only aesthetically but also morally unpalatable, resulting in his othering within the gay rights movement, many advocates of which were aligned with the political left (Ylppö 2016, 62, 70–71). Mosse was also misaligned with liberatory, rights-based work in his decidedly individualistic luxury outlook.

Although Mosse's public presence was such that his very name signaled "gayness" in the Finnish context, his image of homosexuality did not endear him to the independent gay press (that is, Psyke's and Seta's magazines *Ysikutonen* and *SETA*). In her thesis work on the political strategies of the Finnish gay and lesbian rights movement, Terhi Saarinen (1991) identifies Mosse as a "dishonorable" gay whose confinement in many a stereotype, combined with his broad visibility as "a mannequin of gayness", conflicted with liberatory goals. Juvonen (2015, 38) further points out that Mosse was seen to mark the whole gay community on negative terms in a situation where Seta much preferred to showcase its own active, well-educated members as "smart gays". As the country's leading gay rights organization, Seta sought a respectable public image and wanted above all to promote "matter-of-fact" (*asiallinen*) information about homosexuality through its own magazine. Instead of factual information, Mosse's brand offered glamour combined with – often malicious – gossip. He was never accepted as a member of Seta, finding both cultural space and economic possibilities on the pages of scandal and porn magazines instead (Pirttijärvi 2011, 49; Juvonen 2015, 38, 172).

The mismatch between Mosse and the gay rights movement shows in *SETA* magazine's condescending review of Mosse's 1981 memoir *Voi pojat, kun tietäisitte!* ("Oh Boys, if You Knew!"). The reviewer mockingly notes how Mosse had "thrown together" a book (*kyhännyt muistelmansa kirjaksi*) whose cheap paperback format resembled a Disney comic book – fittingly, as the contents did not invite the reader to keep the book and revisit it. The critic complained that Mosse's stories of fleeting romances

with cute boys gave the reader a negative impression of the promiscuousness of gay men, fueling the prejudice that “fags³ (...) are not able to settle down and only look for one-night stands”. “Would that we would someday have a law in Finland that prohibits printing of text that gives false information about homosexuality”, the critic further hoped. As there were very few gay figures in the public eye, it appears that Mosse’s hedonistic style was perceived as such a threat to the legitimacy of the gay rights movement that there was a need to brand it as “false information” (*SETA* 1/1982). Mosse eventually retaliated in an evening newspaper, claiming that HIV was spreading in Seta’s disco events due to the presence of “bisexual whore-boys” (*Ilta-Sanomats* 30.6.1983). By this time, Mosse’s media career had nevertheless moved primarily to porn magazines.

A pornographer

In the course of the 1970s, Mosse’s popular media presence and agency began to extend beyond articles covering his life, connections, and activities to the production side of things, and to the realm of pornography. In 1975, he shot naked men for *Ratto*, one of Lehtimiehet’s hardcore titles (issues 8–10). These visuals were framed as designed especially for female readers (“Women like Monsieur Mosse’s Camera”), and similar series depicting naked men of the world also appeared in the publisher’s *Nyrkkiposti* and *Kalle* around this time (Pajala & Paasonen 2021, 34). Despite being framed as “for women,” these series – perhaps primarily – targeted a gay male audience. Mosse continued his series two years later, eventually baring it all himself (*Ratto* 6–7/1977) by both posing fully nude under the Mediterranean sun and sharing his sexual experiences and expertise (under the headlines “The Boy Must Be Young and Pretty” and “The Japanese Have the Smallest Cone”). At the end of the decade, he posed as the magazine’s monthly naked model (*Ratto* 4/1979). Mosse had posed nude earlier, for an issue of *Hymy* (7/1975) to celebrate his 40+ years of life, and the images of him in the Mediterranean were probably from the same photoshoot. “Why be bashful”, *Hymy* mused: “Mosse has ample sight and size for a small man. Really someone may sigh what a

man the world has lost in him”, positioning Mosse as both manly and decidedly not.

His collaboration with Lehtimiehet had made Mosse a household name. As this alliance came to a close in the early 1980s, he moved to work for the new pornographic publisher Erotica, as a gossip columnist and journalist for *Erotica* (1982–1984) and as the credited editor of the same publisher’s *Gentleman* (1983). While the collaboration did not last long, it was both productive and highly visible. But what was the value of Mosse, a flamboyant gay celebrity, for a porn publisher such as Erotica? The question needs to be approached in the context of competition between rivaling publishers on a highly competitive, language-bound market.

Launched in 1982, *Erotica* competed on the saturated Finnish sex magazine market with hardcore content pushing the boundaries of obscenity legislation. Describing its editorial policy, *Erotica* (1/1983) declared that it wanted to pursue a strategy of quality over quantity: it aimed to specialize in “quality erotica” and professed to support “equality between the sexes also when it comes to giving and receiving erotic pleasure”. Yet most of *Erotica*’s visuals consisted of explicit images of women, presumably targeting a straight male readership. As Timo Korppi became the editor in chief, Mosse joined the editorial team as an accredited society reporter (from issue 4/1982).

In 1983, “Raimo Jääskeläinen ‘Monsieur Mosse’” was named editor of *Gentleman*, which described itself as “high class American-style girl photo magazine”. In an *Erotica* article (3/1983), he laid out his editorial vision: until now, *Gentleman* had been a men’s magazine “of the most daring sort” but it now wanted to appeal to both genders, and to “ordinary” people and gay and lesbian readers alike, aiming for “boys and girls 50/50” in terms of content and readership. This plan to expand the magazine’s address in terms of gender and sexuality did not materialize: *Gentleman* continued to be dominated by photos of women and Mosse himself showed no visible presence on its pages. It is unclear whether he participated in the actual editing but his name nevertheless lent celebrity value to the magazine, linking it to popular culture beyond the sphere of pornography.

In his memoirs, Korppi provides a notably candid answer as for Monsieur Mosse's fit in terms of *Erotica's* ambitions. First of all, Mosse was known by all and knew all the celebrities that mattered. According to Korppi (2002, 117), Mosse's collaboration with Lehtimiehet had ended due to his declining appeal in the public eye, but he still held allure for *Erotica* as a publicity vehicle. He was also something of a distractor by drawing attention away from *Erotica's* controversially explicit visuals and by lifting its status from a porn magazine towards the more aspirational genre marker of a gossip rag (Korppi 2002, 118). *Erotica* wanted to expand its reach towards scandal, hence recruiting the country's foremost candid celebrity gossip. Until Mosse ran out of things to share – his celebrity friends having begun to shun him – the strategy was a success. Evening newspapers picked up on his gossip pieces and provided free publicity for *Erotica* in their tabloids. Since newspapers had to tread a fine line in their sexual content while being aware of its lucrative nature, the arrangement, according to Korppi (2002, 119–120), worked both ways.

Erotica used Mosse to appeal to both female and gay male audiences, and hence broaden the magazine's readership. As a gay celebrity, Mosse was used to addressing straight female readers: he wrote exposés on the male lovers of female celebrities and had long positioned himself as connoisseur of both female beauty and the naked male form, having lent his name to a beauty advice book (Tienhaara & Mosse 1970). *Erotica* then channeled and envisioned the desiring straight female gaze through a gay male point of view. There seems to have been no room for women as independent actors in mainstream Finnish porn magazines of the era, so straight female interests could presumably just as well be served by a middle-aged gay man. To the degree that the interests of non-straight women were an editorial concern, the bulk of magazine content consisting of photos of naked women and "lesbian" scenes sourced from the Swedish *Private* magazine was seen to work well enough.

After Mosse moved to work for *Erotica*, Lehtimiehet launched a short-lived gay porn magazine, *Mosse*, yet refused to address its namesake by name: "This magazine is titled Mosse, and it has nothing to do with

a certain person. This doesn't include scandal. This doesn't even try to be a scandal magazine", read the editorial for its very first issue (1/1983), speaking volumes of Mosse's overall positioning within Finnish celebrity culture. *Mosse* basically used Jääskeläinen's fame to address a gay readership while simultaneously expressing downright hostility towards the man himself. In introducing *Mosse* to its readers, Psyke's publication *Ysikottonen* (3/1983) also noted that the title's association with a man who profited from other people's intimate affairs "may startle," but it did find the new magazine as such worth recommending. Moving editors across its various titles was part of the organizational culture of Lehtimiehet, and so the team behind the novelty porn magazine was more straight than gay male. This did not stop the editors from identifying Mosse as not gay enough, or as not gay in the right way so as to serve the ends of their periodical. In a deeply paradoxical fashion, the editors – in attempting to identify and address *Mosse*'s readership on communal terms – experimented with multiple identifiers, from "homo" to "gay" and "Mosse People" while firmly excluding Mosse himself from the group (Pajala & Paasonen 2021, 35, 40). The choice of name indicates that "Mosse" was simply understood as connoting gayness: it further speaks of the now strained relationship between Mosse and Lehtimiehet, as well as of his othering within gay sexual cultures of the time. *Erotica* soon launched the rivalling, and even more short-lived gay porn magazine *Adonis*, notably without Mosse's involvement (1984; see also Korppi 2002, 127).

In Finnish sex magazines of the 1970s and 1980s, straight and gay male pornography existed "on a continuum rather than in separately lived worlds," to quote Tom Waugh (2017, 132) in his pioneering 1985 essay "Men's Pornography: Gay vs. Straight" (and his later reflection on the essay). Writing in a North American context involving large cities with thriving subcultures, Waugh draws attention to similarities in the uses and ideologies of gay and straight porn. Such parallel existence was concrete on a small market like Finland in the 1980s, where porn for straight men and porn for gay men was published side by side in the same magazines by companies mainly catering to a straight public and also publishing highly mainstream titles. Here Finnish porn

magazines also followed the example already set in Sweden (Rydström 2022). Notably, *Kalle*, Lehtimiehet's most successful porn periodical at the time, launched "gay pages" featuring stories, nude photos, travel tips, and articles on gay liberation in 1978, which went on to become a staple popular feature in an otherwise presumably straight magazine (Pajala & Paasonen 2021, 34–35). Parallel existence is key to explaining both the presence of gay content in straight periodicals and the branding of gay porn magazines like *Mosse* and *Adonis* as catering "to the ladies". At the same time, *Mosse*'s presence in popular print media cannot be reduced to such parallelism, given the extent to which his celebrity transgressed the field of porn as such.

Beyond gossiping about celebrities and their beautiful young lovers (some illustrated with nude shots), *Mosse*'s journalistic efforts for *Erotica* mostly kept a distance to male sexual cultures, especially those of the kinkier kind. Notable exceptions include an article in which *Mosse* narrated a fight at Seta's masquerade ball, and the ensuing court case (7/1982), and a travel feature credited to "Mosse and Test Team", covering their visit to Stockholm's BDSM club, SLM, with overtones of scandal: "There could also be something worse to come, as we found cellars and vaults at the end of the club, where the so-called more intimate socializing was focused. We saw chains on the wall, whips, handcuffs, and branding irons..." (10/1983). In the accompanying photos, *Mosse* posed by the club door and next to a sling with a solemn, perplexed expression indicating wary surprise; the caption claimed that the photographer had a camera hidden in his groin (Figure 3). With its mentions of neo-Nazi patrons and the team's final, "hair-rising" escape, the article reads straightforwardly as kink shaming, and comes with a fair dollop of homophobia.

It is noteworthy that *Erotica* began to feature more gay content right *after* *Mosse* stopped working for the magazine, including regular travel features with tips for tourists (e.g., "Gay Stockholm!" 4/1984; "Extra: Gay & Trans Mallorca!" 5/1984; "Gay Zurich!" 6/1984; "Something New up the Rectum all the Time: New Gay London," 12/1984). Even as nude photos of men were still framed as "especially for women", fol-



Figure 3. Mosse reports from a Stockholm club, Erotica 10/1983

Following a by now established tradition, the magazine also advertised *Adonis* in all its issues. *Gentleman* had featured gay content towards the end of Mosse's editorship, and under a new editor also began to offer the gay tourist advice that was a staple feature in *Adonis* so that the publisher's three magazines thus factually competed with one another with near-identical content. The situation is similar to that in Sweden, where instead of differentiating the target audiences of his three porn magazines, publisher Curth Hson sought to attract the largest possible readership for each one of them (Rydström 2022, 163). It is most evident that Finnish porn magazines of the era wanted to attract gay consumers, yet Monsieur Mosse's input into this remains ambiguous at best.

A gossip

In *Erotica*, Mosse's columns offered glimpses of the good life, describing the life of the rich and the famous, alongside his own cosmopolitan, champagne-infused lifestyle at a time when most Finns did not even do

much international travel. Despite speaking hardly any English himself, Mosse's contributions had a distinctly American orientation and he began to portray himself as something of an expert on US culture – detailing, for example, the alleged male lover of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover (incidentally, one of Lemmey and Miller's "bad gays"). Mosse's celebrity gossip drew on his familiarity with certain sections of Finnish high society, especially the expat celebrities (beauty queens, models, businessmen) that he socialized with during his regular stays in Florida.

Mosse contributed two regular columns to *Erotica*. The first was an extensive, multi-page celebrity gossip column, the name of which varied – from "Mosse's Stardust" (*Mossen tähtisumua*) to "Mosse's Guillotine" (*Mossen giljotiini*) and "Mosse's Candid Camera" (*Mossen piilokamera*) – where large portions of the gossip concerned the man himself. His second column, titled "Mosse's Bum Letters" (*Mossen pyllykirjeet*) – a play on "myllykirje" (*mill letter*), the critical letters written by Finland's long-term president Urho Kaleva Kekkonen – consisted of critical, snarky letters addressed to public figures. It remains questionable to what extent Mosse was sole author of the letters: according to Korppi (2002, 123), he was a colorful raconteur but "couldn't write one bit". When the two decided to cash in on particularly juicy gossip on female celebrities as luxury escorts in the 1983 scandal booklet *Virpin ja Anita'n puuhut: Mosse paljastaa kaiken!* ("What Virpi and Anita have been up to: Mosse reveals all!"), it was apparently Mosse who told the stories and Korppi who gave them loose narrative form (Korppi 2002, 123–124).

Mosse's characteristic gossip column tone was snarky and frivolous. By contrast, the "bum letters" were addressed to figures within the more legitimate public sphere, such as politicians, and while they were undeniably gossipy – and occasionally plain bitchy – in tone, they also ventured into political commentary, for example on matters pertaining to gay rights. In a letter addressed to the evangelical Christian MP, Ulla Järvillehto, whom Seta had recently nominated "rat of the year" for her fight against homosexuality, Mosse (or someone writing in his name) delved into the "oppression and labelling" of gays and the lack of love shown by Christian politicians (7–8/1983). On other occasions,

the letters were straightforward gossip laced with either venom or saccharine, as in the disjointed notes addressed to Lehtimiehet's powerful publisher, Urpo Lahtinen: "You have done more good for this country than many other so-called 'great men' combined (...) Do you remember, Urpo, waking in my bed at the Mosabacka house? You laid your hand on your fly and luckily found it closed." (4/1983) The letter ended with the suggestion that he and Lahtinen publish joint memoirs, and hence renew their collaboration.

As an out gay man during an era when this formed very much the exception in a broadly homophobic national culture, Mosse was well suited to the part of a gossip. As Gavin Butt (2005, 4) notes, the historically prevalent framing of homosexuality as a scandalous topic has produced an affinity between homosexuality and "gossip, as the 'low' discursive practice of scandalous subjects". Mosse's public persona certainly conformed to – and embraced – the stereotype of effeminate gay men drawn to the supposedly feminine practice of gossip (Butt 2005, 11–12). Moreover, following Michel Foucault (1990, 34–35, 58–63), in Western culture sexuality has been seen as the ultimate secret truth about a person and thus also been a key topic of both confession and gossip, not least when sexual tastes have differed from dominant norms. Having come out with gusto, Mosse claimed a position as someone with the expertise to reveal sexual secrets. His own identity promised that he had special knowledge about sexuality and that he was able to educate readers in what it was like to live as a gay man, something that had been very little discussed in Finnish media before his coming-out interview of 1971. Furthermore, having taken the risk of speaking publicly about his own preferences, Mosse could implicitly demand that heterosexual celebrities should also to equal extent tolerate having their private lives discussed in public: his exposés for *Erotica* variously chronicled accusations of a former beauty queen and her socialite friend running a brothel (also the topic of his gossip book), the Finnish business elite frequenting sex workers, and the singer Donna Summer's Finnish boyfriend Jorma, "an international playboy", spilling the beans about their relationship while posing in the nude (issues 1/1983, 3/1983, 6/1983, 7–8 1983; see also Mosse 1983).

Snarky as his output was, Mosse's contributions, with their humorous, clever, and sassy tone, brought a sense of fun to *Erotica*. This was in line with *Erotica*'s gimmicky branding as a novelty title known for gags: some issues featured photos that you could scratch to reveal their more explicit bits, others came with a sex-themed board game or a card deck, and yet others were advertised as having "the smell" (presumably of female genitalia) and came packed in plastic bags (2/1982, 12/1983, 5/1982, 1-3/1984; Korppi 2002, 111-116). Mosse's gossip and other appearances in the magazine contributed to this ludic tone that had, generally speaking, been more manifest in domestic porn titles of the previous decade. He was something of a natural fit in terms of the magazine's attention economy as his celebrity status, now some two decades in the making, was largely crafted from snappy headlines, candid gossip, and extravagant public appearances.

Erotica's strategy of banking on the value of Mosse's gossip was not, however, void of risk. In 1983, businessman Lauri Asko sued *Erotica* for 250 000 FIM as compensation for damages for claims the magazine had published about him (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 11.5.1983). The court case was a response to a two-part interview with Asko's former partner Anja Laine, credited to Monsieur Mosse and billed as "the most daring interview in Finland ever" (*Erotica* 4-5/1982). The interview painted Asko as a violent bully who spent his days drinking and squandering his inherited wealth. Characteristically, the articles highlighted Mosse's personal relationship with the interviewee, describing how she had spent time at his place in Florida after escaping Asko. The court found in the complainant's favor, and Mosse, Laine, and Korppi were ordered to pay him 80 000 FIM (circa 37 000 euros in today's currency) in damages for mental suffering. In addition, all three were fined for a continuing violation of privacy, and *Erotica* was ordered to return to the state its illegally obtained 10 000 FIM (circa 4 000 euros) profit for the issue in question (*Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* 19.10.1983). Mosse's involvement with *Erotica* ended soon after: while he was still listed as the magazine's society editor for issue 2/1984, he no longer contributed.

A camp figure

Camp characterizes Monsieur Mosse's persona both in the realm of celebrity gossip and porn. The opening page of his 1981 tell-all memoir, *Voi pojat, kun tietäisitte!* ("Oh Boys, if You Knew!"), provides a representative example of his style:

I know nothing more lovely than the taste of expensive champagne [...] Nothing beats the touch of mink. I've been made to slip from a white leather sofa to the waters of a marble swimming pool. And to emerge again onto Yves St. Laurent's silk sheets and the embrace of a beautiful, tanned boy. The sheets are black. (Mosse 1981, 5)

Here the author identified himself as both feminine and "megalomaniac". Describing his childhood years spent in a wealthy industrialist Danish family as an evacuee during WW2, Mosse declares: "I swam into life of luxury like a fish" (Mosse 1981, 7). Learning about the finer things early on in life, he explained, made it hard to conform to Finnish society marked by post-war scarcity:

The return to a one-room apartment [...] came as a shock to my heart yearning for luxury [...]

I don't fit in a dingy one-room apartment. I'm alien to the wafts of a cheap beer bar. Glamour, the sparkle of diamonds, candlelight on silver tableware and floral arrangements are the props befitting my background. [...]

I've always been a little finer than others, and hence envied. (Mosse 1981, 7, 8)

Understanding himself as exceptional from a young age, Mosse explains, he fashioned himself as a fine standout.

Monsieur Mosse's brand of camp conforms to Mark Booth's (1999, 69) observation that "[c]amp is primarily a matter of self-presentation"; a perfor-

mance that requires an audience. Mosse's camp was clearly "a pose" (Galef & Galef 1991, 12) meant to attract, provoke, and annoy his public. Mosse presented himself as a lover of luxury and beauty in highly exaggerated terms, defying the norms of good taste in 1970s and 1980s Finland. David Galef and Harold Galef (1991, 16) describe camp as a form of satire, "an aesthetic joke" that offers compensation for "alienation from mainstream society". As a gay celebrity of precarious income, Monsieur Mosse was not truly part of the heteronormative elite: while readers could enjoy Mosse's excessive performance, they could also fail to get the joke and take it seriously, as a pretension to elite status. It then follows that the press enjoyed revealing Mosse's performances of a life of luxury as being without basis. At the same time as Mosse put on a performance of living the high life with the rich, the beautiful, and the famous, his fluctuating wealth made regular news (e.g., *Viikkosanomat* 43/1971; *Hymy* 2/1972; *Hymy* 7/1975). When Mosse was implicated in his beauty queen friend's police investigation, a popular magazine gleefully reported: "The façades of the sweet life burst" (*Makean elämän kullissit repesivät; Apu* 16/1983). The gap between Mosse's factual financial circumstances and his performance of a glamorous lifestyle remained a continuous source of popular entertainment.

Camp is crucial to understanding Monsieur Mosse's media persona also in seemingly straight contexts. Throughout his collaboration with *Erotica*, Mosse remained the object of stories. In a particularly striking incident, the magazine (12/1983) published an article titled "Mosse got engaged to a black – GIRL!", claiming that all of Finland had gone topsy-turvy with the shocking news. Illustrated with photos of the couple sipping champagne, the article first describes how Mosse met the 23-year-old "exotic Jamaican beauty" Lucinda in London, where she performed at a club, and how the happy couple were now celebrating their future together. The article's second spread showed Lucinda trying on an engagement ring made of ivory and diamonds during a romantic luxury dinner, and the couple posing next to Mosse's red Cadillac in fur coats, hers newly purchased and made of arctic fox (Figure 4). Rife with exoticizing references to "Southern heat" and "fiery kisses", the article's third spread shows the couple hugging on a bed, both naked except for



Figure 4. Mosse celebrates his engagement to Lucinda, Erotica 12/1983

Lucinda's garters, with an empty bottle of Veuve Clicquot by their side. It further illustrates their intimate games by a pool, introducing the reader to Mosse's full frontal nudity. His gossip column for the same issue showed Mosse testing out Helsinki's supply of oysters: "it's been said that if you eat enough oysters, you get a hard-on like a bull. Since Lucinda settles for nothing less, let's see what these potency oysters can do".

A stunt hardly designed to be taken at face value, the engagement party is a curious example of "straight acting" with a twist. Conventionally, "straight acting" refers to a "man who appears not to be gay but who is nonetheless sexually attracted to other men" (Alderson 2014, 7), an act that requires the appearance of ordinariness and normality without the involved parties seeming affectatious. The article has the smirking Mosse *acting straight* while not really straight acting. Remaining his flamboyant self, Mosse performs sexual attraction towards a woman on-camera – notably towards a woman of color described in highly exoticizing terms throughout. "Because of Lucinda, I've fully turned my life

around”, he is quoted as saying. “Let others find religion and repent. This is my own religious awakening...” Mosse is all masculine bravado in his presumed post-coital bliss, and further adds: “I just showed the world how a rooster fucks (*mistä kukko kuksii*) [...] But just wait until some magazine gets exclusive rights to my wedding night with Lucinda. Then we won’t hold back but let the film roll all the way to the end...”

Straight acting is generally not playful (Alderson 2014), whereas Mosse’s performance of new-found heterosexuality certainly is. Mosse puts on a camp performance of heterosexuality not meant to be read as “straight” – consider, for example, the caption “Oh, this young love: when two hot-blooded people are at play, one Jamaican and the other a basic Finn (*perussuomalainen*), even the frigid late autumn cold is no issue”. Knowingly reiterating and visualizing staple features of Mosse’s celebrity image, as listed in the opening page of his memoirs (furs, jewelry, champagne, expensive cars, indoor pools), the article was basically built as a fictitious stunt, with both Mosse’s heterosexual engagement and the nude pictures from the couple’s “night of love” advertised on the issue’s cover.

Mosse’s work in *Erotica* came to a close with issue 1/1984 and he was no longer listed as editor of *Gentleman* in the first issue of that year. His last *Erotica* gossip column predictably opened with a commentary on his recent engagement: “Finnish gay circles got seriously mad at me as I supposedly betrayed them by hooking up with a black girl. [...] I’ll only say once that it’s my own business if I burn the candle at both ends”. Mosse posed in a total of eleven photos of this three-page column: while such visibility had become something of a trademark, his being the main subject of the gossip suggests that the supply of fresh celebrity content was by now running out. *Mosse* magazine noted the development with mocking glee:

Should someone be interested, Monsieur Mosse, in whose honor this magazine hasn’t been established, has left his previous job or has been kicked out. Faithful to his habit, this aged “nancy boy” (*puppelipoika*) gave his former employer something of a full lashing and offered his

services to e.g., Lehtimiehet. On the basis of our instant survey, Mosse's gossip is of more interest to straight people than *Mosse's* readers, so let's leave him be. (*Mosse* 1/1984)

By this time Monsieur Mosse's market value had declined, and during his final decade, he no longer held such high-profile positions in the popular press as he did during his collaboration with Lehtimiehet and *Erotica*.

Conclusion: No role model

Although Monsieur Mosse was a Finnish media staple from the mid-1960s to the mid-80s, with particular visibility in the 1970s, his position within the publishing economy was seldom secure, being dependent on arrangements with publishers (in addition to Lehtimiehet and *Erotica*, he had a short-term deal with *Apu*, one of *Hymy's* competitors). In Korppi's (2002, 117–125) telling, Mosse was ultimately used by both Lehtimiehet and *Erotica*, and then cast aside when no longer useful – that is, when his celebrity status dwindled and his reservoir of gossip ran out. This is not to say that he simply disappeared from the public eye the last decade of his life, merely that regular income from magazine publishers was no longer available.

In his 2014 blog post on Monsieur Mosse's memoirs and fame, Hulivilipoika (aka Klaus Laitinmäki) – an accomplished chronicler of gay history – writes of Mosse's contemporaries' views of him as both an embodiment of prejudice and a criminal blackmailer whose leverage consisted of vast reservoirs of seedy gossip and high degrees of public visibility. His blackmail conviction has by and large been forgotten – or bypassed – in contemporary retellings of his life-story focusing on lavish houses, famous friends, Rolls Royces, and remote-controlled “champagne robots” (e.g., *Iltalehti* 16.1.2021). Yet Mosse's gossiping ways, which involved publishing dirt on close friends, extended to straightforward malice towards those who could not afford the kind of outness from which he fashioned his celebrity brand.

Mosse's particular public performance appropriated and operated with numerous stereotypes so as to be compatible with perceptions of

effeminate, shallow, bitchy and hedonistic male homosexuality, and incompatible with the politics and aesthetics of the gay and lesbian rights movement aspiring for matter-of-factness and respectability: this resulted in Mosse's othering as a "dishonorable" outsider vis-à-vis other contemporary Finnish celebrities and gay culture alike (cf. Taavetti 2016, 96). Mosse (1981, 16) further detached his own persona from his objects of desire, claiming that "I've never liked the traditional homosexual type: pretty, girlish, soft. I've always chosen a man who is athletic, manly, and man-like. They've been very young, and possibly unsure of their traits".

While Mosse certainly offers no aspirational role model, we suggest that by examining a "bad gay" once established as the country's only – and hence unofficially official – gay celebrity figure (Hulivilipoika 2014) who has since been largely confined to popular cultural marginalia, it is possible to outline the parameters of gay visibility in 1970s and 1980s Finland, as well as to highlight the particularities and ambiguities of the scandal and sex press of the era as a popular public affording variations of sexual outness. Here, "badness" – from being a gossip blackmailer to working as a pornographer or just being plain bitchy and camp – functioned as a distinctive trademark and competitive asset through which to remain in the public eye. Mosse disclosed things that others would not, but it was also the case that things *could* be disclosed under his name. *Mosse* the magazine was not entirely wrong in suggesting that Mosse the man found his main audience among a straight readership willing to be appropriately scandalized by his exposés and flamboyant self-performances.

Monsieur Mosse's public image was idiosyncratic in that it was bound up with gayness, extravagance, gossip, and luxury. It was also unbound in moving from carefully curated displays of wealth and jet-set life to full-frontal nudity: he famously celebrated his fiftieth birthday undressed except for a pair of fur trunks and, as discussed above, posed nude on the pages of several periodicals. If there is one characteristic that defines Mosse's persona, it is his unflinching shamelessness: it can be argued that his public presence involved the kind of flaunting that lies at the heart of the French term, *se camper*, on which the notion of camp is allegedly based (Galef & Galef 1991, 19). There was a firm

refusal of shame to Mosse's public persona, whether he was displaying his body, dishing out details of his (and other people's) love life, or transgressing extant social codes. All this involved a sense of boundarylessness with a disregard toward appropriate or conventional modes of being and acting. Involving an acute sense of the social norms breached, this disregard embraced infamy while eschewing queer political alliances as very much a solo act. In Mosse's (1981, 10) own words, he was a "national super celebrity and pet of society columns. His duty is to be crazy and funny, not decent."

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NOTES

1. Men's magazines *Nyrkkiposti* (1972–1975) and *Kalle* (1973, 1976–1985), gay porn magazines *Mosse* (1983–1984) and *Adonis* (1984), scandal magazine *Viikkosanomat* (1971–1973), and gay magazines *Ysikutonen* (1983–1985) and *SETA* (1983–1985).
2. As the national digitization process is on-going, the archive contains a limited selection of newspapers and magazines from the 1960s–1980s, but it is useful for tracing Mosse's appearances in the news.
3. "Hintit." In a contemporaneous context, the term was not always a slur, even as the vocabulary was shifting. As we have discussed before: "The 1983 volume of *96*, published by gay organization Psyke [...] used a variety of terms: homoseksuaali (homosexual as noun), gay (occasionally with Finnish spelling gei), homo, hintti and even the occasional homofili (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 synonymi') and was being replaced by the word homo." (Pajala & Paasonen 2021, 35.)