

# Introduction

*Jenny Kangasvuo*

The last two years have been tough for *The Journal of Queer Studies in Finland*. The latest issue before the current one was the issue 2/2008 that I coedited with Sanna Karkulehto. In 2009 not a single issue was published, and now, in early 2011, the issue published is not 1/2011 but a compiled issue 1–2/2010 that collects the work done during the past years. I sincerely apologize for the lag in publishing dates.

The lack of resources, both monetary and personal, has been the main reason for the delay. I have been working as the editor of the journal since 2005, first with Sanna Karkulehto until 2008 and then alone till today, albeit more or less reluctantly. The issues of the year 2009 were planned to be edited by guest editors, but when schedules start to slide they will certainly slide forever. However, people interested in the journal have kept it alive and resuscitated it in those moments I have been willing to let the patient die. During the past two years people have proposed articles, reviews and essays to be published in SQS, asked about it, worried about its demise.

Nevertheless, maintaining an academic journal with almost no resources whatsoever is pure insanity and relies on the ability of the editors to bribe, threaten, plead and whine to friends, relatives and colleagues in order to get proofreading, reviewing, copyediting and layout services in return. I am immensely grateful to these people I have pestered during the past years.

I also have to thank those people who have been patient enough in waiting for their texts to be published in SQS – some of them have waited for two years after the initial submission of their texts.

The focus of this issue is in Literary Studies. The focus was not chosen, but it formed itself: several talented literary scholars decided to propose articles and texts to SQS at the same time. Christian Norocel's article "Reading 'Princepele' through the Eyes of the Doomed – Queering Nationalism and Masculinity in a Communist Romanian Novel" is a pioneering study on Romanian literature that is rarely analysed from a queer perspective. Pauliina Haasjoki writes about ambivalence, omnipotence and sexuality in Monika Fagerholm's novel *Diiva* in her article "Kaikkivoipaisesti queer. Omnipotenssi, seksuaalisuus ja ambivalenssi Monika Fagerholmin *Diivassa*". We are also proud to publish the lectio praecursoria of Andrea Hynynen, who defended her doctoral dissertation in May 2010 at Åbo Akademi. Her dissertation concentrates on studying gender and sexuality in Marguerite Yourcenar's novels from a queer perspective. Livia Hekanaho's review written on Hynynen's dissertation offers a profound analysis of the work.

In the Art Gallery I am happy to indulge in some serious fan girl action and interview a Finnish comic artist Tiitu Takalo, who was given The Women's Studies Award in 2010 for her work that criticizes and questions gender

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and sexuality norms. The indepth interview digs in the artist's personal and ideological background. My aim has been in this interview to provide the artist a space in which she could tell freely about her art and thoughts rather than to analyse it or weave a neat introduction about the artist's work. Tiitu Takalo's work is openly political and feminist but still it maintains a queer perspective to sexuality and gender.

The picture on the right is from Takalo's album *Nurin* (2007). I have chosen two panels from a longer comic as an example. The title of the comic "Woman, know your place!" reflects how gender and sexuality are created through places and speaking acts. "Sorry miss", says a visibly feminine salesperson to the protagonist, "this is the men's department". In another encounter with gender norms a visibly masculine person lies in a bed saying: "Please, don't. Shouldn't all women be passive in bed?" The protagonist answers: "I don't know, I haven't been in bed with all women". The comic shows how places and speaking acts can also be tools to question the simplicity of gender and sexuality. The comic, as well as Takalo's many other comics are viscerally realistic and often autobiographical. Takalo's comics are rarely comical or humorous, and even when they are, the punchline has a bitter aftertaste.

The cover image of this issue is from Takalo's series "Pyhiä naisia", "Holy Women" in which she ponders how gender is represented in Catholic cult of the Saints. Saint Wilgefortis was a daughter of a Portuguese king who engaged her daughter to the pagan king of Sicily. Wilgefortis was a Christian and vowed to stay a virgin. She prayed to God and asked him to make her unsuitable for marriage, and God answered to her prayer by giving her beard and moustache. The engagement was broken off and Wilgefortis' enraged father crucified her as a punishment. Saint Wilgefortis, in all her bearded glory, is a suitable Saint to decorate the cover page of *The Journal for Queer Studies in Finland*.

## Nainen, tiedä paikkasi!



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