

# MARI RISTOLAINEN AT UiT

DR. MARI RISTOLAINEN DOES RESEARCH ON BORDER WRITING AT THE KARELIAN INSTITUTE, JOENSUU



Dr Mari Ristolainen is a postdoctoral fellow at the Karelian Institute in the University of Eastern Finland, working within the Finnish Academy project Writing Cultures and Traditions at Borders (<http://www.uef.fi/wctb>). Dr. Ristolainen is representative of the multidisciplinary oriented young Finnish scholars using a multi-disciplinary approach in Russian Studies. She has studied Russian language and literature at the University of Joensuu and psychology at the Moscow State University and worked and published on Soviet and Post-Soviet amateur art in the Pskov province (Preferred Realities: Soviet and Post-Soviet Amateur Art in Novorzhev, Kikumora Publications, 2008) and in the Karelian Republic ("My Karelia" – "The Home of Our Poems": Karelianness as a Feeling of Locality in Amateur Writings (the Case of Sortavala), Kikumora Publications, 2010). Her current research project is on Virtual Frontiers: Russian Border Guards Poems Online. This autumn Dr. Ristolainen has been working as a visiting researcher in the Border Aesthetics project at the UiT, focussing on the aesthetics of photographic representations of the borderland province of Soviet Karelia. She has also initiated a writing competition run by the MurmanLit.ru literature portal in Murmansk with the theme Literature without Borders, which may provide material for further research.

**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> MARCH**  
**13:15-15:00 IN ROOM E.0103**

## GUEST LECTURE

**"FACELESS GATEKEEPERS?  
RUSSIAN BORDER GUARDS' POEMS ONLINE"**

**STATE BORDERS ARE GUARDED BY FACELESS MEN IN ARMS. PASSPORTS ARE CHECKED BY FACELESS COMPUTERS. VISAS ARE STAMPED ON ENTRY AND DEPARTURE BY FACELESS OFFICERS IN UNIFORMS. DON'T SPEAK AT THE BORDER! DON'T SMILE AT THE BORDER! DON'T LOOK THE BORDER GUARD IN THE EYE! BUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE DID? WOULD WE NOTICE THAT THESE MEN AND WOMEN WORKING AT THE BORDERS ARE MORE THAN FACELESS GATEKEEPERS?**

**THIS GUEST LECTURE IS BASED ON DR. RISTOLAINEN'S RESEARCH PROJECT IN WHICH SHE EXAMINES POEMS POSTED BY RUSSIAN BORDER GUARDS ON THEIR OWN ONLINE FORUM. THIS LECTURE DISCUSSES HOW THE THOUSANDS OF RUSSIAN MEN AND WOMEN GUARDING THE LONGEST BORDER IN THE WORLD HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES A UNIQUE FACE AND VOICE IN THE ANONYMOUS WORLD OF THE INTERNET. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE ON THIS FORUM? WHAT ARE THEY WRITING ABOUT? HOW ARE BORDERS REPRESENTED IN THEIR POEMS?**

**IN ADDITION, THIS LECTURE RAISES AWARENESS THAT AMATEUR WRITINGS ARE AN UNDERSTUDIED, BUT SIGNIFICANT FIELD OF STUDY, AND INCREASES KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF RUSSIAN INTERNET COMMUNITIES AND THE RUSSIAN POLITICS OF BOTH OFF-AND ONLINE, AND GIVES AN EXAMPLE HOW THE INTERNET CAN BE USED IN THE VARIOUS FIELDS OF STUDY.**

**DR. RISTOLAINEN'S LECTURE IS THE RESULT OF AN INITIATIVE BY THE BORDER POETICS RESEARCH GROUP ([HTTP://UIT.NO/BORDERPOETICS](http://uit.no/borderpoetics)) AS PART OF THE BORDER AESTHETICS PROJECT, AND IS MADE POSSIBLE BY FUNDING FROM THE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF NORWAY.**