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### ***Habituality of the Finnish Political Imaginary on Russia, 1918–1930s***

*This paper contemplates what ‘observing Russia as Finns’ might mean. It seeks to do so in a way which escapes the beholdenness of the “hatred of Russkies” paradigm which has dominated interpretations of Finnish-Russian relations, particularly during the interwar period. To meet this goal, I have divided the paper into four parts. First, I present political imaginary as a fruitful foil for approaching the question. Second, I suggest that the Finnish political imaginary on Russia is undergirded by a chivalric equation or language game. Third, I turn my attention to a stock of political cartoons published in Finnish satirical magazines during the epoch 1918–1930s; the task there is to examine how the chivalric equation consisting of three model-images – the ‘Knight’, the ‘Treasure’ and the ‘Beast’ – is actualized in acts of statecrafting. Fourth, leaning on Peirce’s pragmatistic social theory I propose that the mode of being of the chivalric equation is habituality – i.e. it is habitually available in the Finnish political imaginary on Russia. This fourth and last step involves returning to the notion of political imaginary and characterizing it in pragmatist terms as a dynamic process that revolves around the poles of habituality and creativity.*

## ***Introduction***

“The relations between Finland and Russia are unique for the reason that they are not always of the same kind but are quite ambiguous. Over here, one hears full-mouthed talk about the Russian hereditary enemy and sees monuments being erected for Russian emperors”<sup>1</sup>. So spoke Väinö Voionmaa, a Social Democratic member of the Finnish Parliament in 1919. His words provide a convenient point of departure for introducing the paper at hand. In it, I work on the presumption that despite evident ambiguities there is regularity to Finnish ways of dealing with Russia and that the pragmatist notion of *habituality* provides a fruitful foil for examining the element of regularity in Finnish observations on Russia. Recently, a top-ranking civil servant in the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs also alluded to such a possibility. In a TV interview aired on the Independence Day 2006, he argued that Finns ought to “observe Russia as Finns and Europeans”<sup>2</sup>. While I leave inquiries into European political imaginaries for others to pursue, my task in this paper is to elaborate what ‘observing Russia as Finns’ might actually mean. I attempt to do so in terms that escape the grip of the “hatred of the Russkies” interpretation which has dominated analyses of Finnish-Russian relationships during the interwar period.

To meet this task, I shall use a stock of political cartoons from the epoch 1918–1930s as research material and inquire into a dynamic process of *political imaginary*. In other words, I argue that grasping what ‘observing Russia as Finns’ actually means can be done by attending to the Finnish political imaginary on Russia. I characterize political imaginary with the help of the pragmatistic social theory which provides interesting answers to the question over how such orderliness actually comes about. It does so by suggesting that action basically revolves around the poles of habituality and creativity.

Grasping such a profound and logic of international political life necessitates immersing oneself in the specificity of empirical reality. I thus work on the proposition that political cartoons are instances of *statecrafting*. I suggest that rather than expressions of “hatred”, they are stakes in the political process where different political groups seek to consolidate themselves as a legitimate political authority in the newly independent Finland. At the heart of this debating lies the question over how to relate to the new kind of Russia. The separation of Finland from the Russian Empire in late 1917 and the civil war that followed rendered old ways of conceiving of political authority

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<sup>1</sup> Voionmaa 1919, 325.

<sup>2</sup> Pertti Torstila in Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) News, 6 December 2006.

dysfunctional. To grasp the historically contingent meanings that statecraft – i.e. competent politics – acquired in such a situation is to show how elements of political imaginary come together in actual political situations. Or, inquiry into political imaginary or ‘observing Russia as Finns’ can be accomplished by way of an inquiry into such context specific practices of statecrafting. Taking this road of inquiry also involves resurrecting the notion of statecraft and making it analytically powerful by treating it as a *speech act* where something is done with words or visual signs.

On this basis, this paper seeks to make three contributions: First, it attempts to put forth a fresh interpretation of Finnish-Russian relationships, one which escapes the beholdenness of the “hatred of Russkies” interpretation. Second, it tries to elaborate a pragmatist application for studying political imaginary thereby expanding with the help of the pragmatistic habit concept on Martin Wight’s argument that international relations is essentially a matter of “habitual intercourse”<sup>3</sup>. Third, this historical analysis has contemporary relevance – examining an epoch which, in many ways, can be held as a formative period in Finnish-Russian relationships, it is interested in how the cartoons’ beliefs concerning good statecraft arise from a world experience which is different from but partly similar or isomorphic to ours<sup>4</sup>. Key symbols of political imaginary would provide a fruitful site for an inquiry into how the past is present in contemporary interpretations of Russia. Consider, for instance, the way in which the bestial symbol of the Russian ‘Bear’ was recently actualized by *the Economist*: “The Soviet Union is dead and communism long buried. But Mr Putin wants you to know that the Russian bear is backwearing a snarl with its designer sunglasses.”<sup>5</sup> The passage conveniently combines the more archaic thought of Russian aggressiveness and expansiveness embodied in the symbol of the ‘Bear’ with the present condition of Russia’s growing economic affluence and integration to world markets (‘designer sunglasses’).

### ***Chivalric Equation of the Political Imaginary***

The focus of this paper is on statecrafting – i.e. argumentation concerning skilled politics – as represented in a selection of political cartoons, but political imaginary is not limited to them. Cartooned arguments are undergirded by a more all-encompassing structure of signification that has permeated theories, novels, and political accounts that

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<sup>3</sup> Wight 1987, 221.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rytövuori-Apunen 2005, 164.

<sup>5</sup> *The Economist*, editorial, August 24–31, 2007.

touch upon Russia and Finnish-Russian relationships. The Finnish political imaginary on Russia has an imagery of its own which crops up both in visual and verbal accounts on the eastern neighbour. It consists of a repertoire of archetypal *dramatis personae* which provide a convenient point of departure for analysing the structure of signification. In order to have some vocabulary to work with, I have designated these archetypal elements as the ‘Knight,’ the ‘Beast,’ and the ‘Treasure’ and refer to their unity with the notion of chivalric cultural-historical equation or language game.

A *cultural-historical equation* is unlike an allegory with a single meaning; it admits of semantic substitution to the extent that the correlation between the members of the equation remains the same<sup>6</sup>. The notion of *language game* suggests that these elements are connected to one another by family resemblances – i.e. there is no essential quality that needs to be common to all but the elements are united by overlapping and criss-crossing similarities<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, model-images that in one way or another allude to ideas associated with knighthood, bestiality, and treasure-likeness are remarkably prevalent in the corpus of cartoons. On this basis, it seems legitimate to presuppose that the language games of chivalry and Finnish-Russian relationships are somehow in contact with one another. The task of the analytical section of this paper is to inquire into the ways in which the members of the chivalric equation undergo semantic substitution when actualized in varying situations.

Although not all the ‘Knights’ that crop up in the practices of political imaginary necessarily appear as mounted warriors and not all the ‘Beasts’ are always embodied in explicitly monster-like, in-human features, these designations are neither arbitrary nor necessary. Instead, they are *conventional*. This suggests that they allude to ways of thinking that have been handed down by tradition. In this sense, the archetypal elements of political imaginary relate to what Charles S. Peirce in his pragmatistic sign theory discusses as Thirdness. The initial emergence of the knightly archetype from cartoons is premised on a shared iconicity – i.e. similarity in structure – between the cartooned flock of virile and courageous male characters and ideas of masculinity and heroism related to the formally professed cavalryman during the European middle-ages. In Peirce’s sign theory, such similarity is referred to with the term Firstness. This is to say that instead of being arbitrary and unmotivated, the archetypes of the Finnish

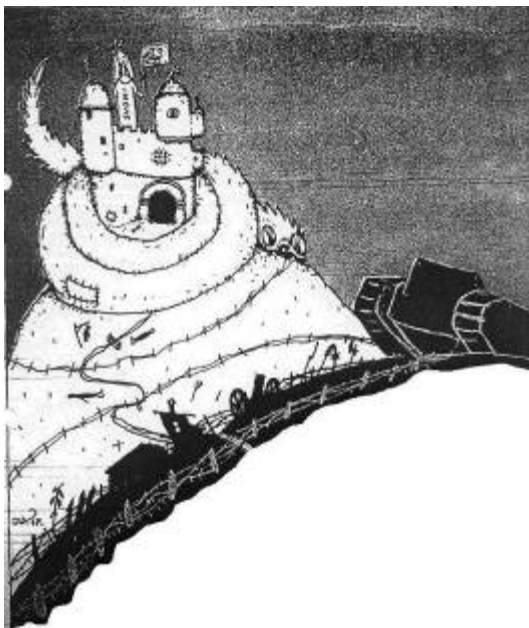
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<sup>6</sup> Lotman 1990, 85.

<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein 2001, §54.

political imaginary allude through their sign aspects to an established understanding of chivalry which is a result of a real social process.

The formation of the initial hypothesis concerning the presence of the chivalric formula in the Finnish political imaginary on Russia is premised on dialectic between two textual operations that Paul Ricoeur in his hermeneutics calls *distanciation* and *appropriation*. These notions designate a dialectic process whereby the text of chivalry decontextualises itself from its immediate social and historical conditions as well as from the limits of ostensive reference<sup>8</sup>. The language game of chivalry is liberated from its references to the armed cavalymen of the European Middle Ages and acquires a new set of references in the political imaginary of Finnish-Russian relationships. In this paper, I work on the presumption that in political cartoons, the new set of references which the text of chivalry acquires relates to statecrafting. The point is thus not to focus on what an agentive state ‘Finland’ does but to examine the ways in which the chivalric formula is put to use in debates in which political groups seek to consolidate themselves as a legitimate political authority. Such statecrafting involves putting forth arguments about their capacity to secure the success and survival of the Finnish political unit.



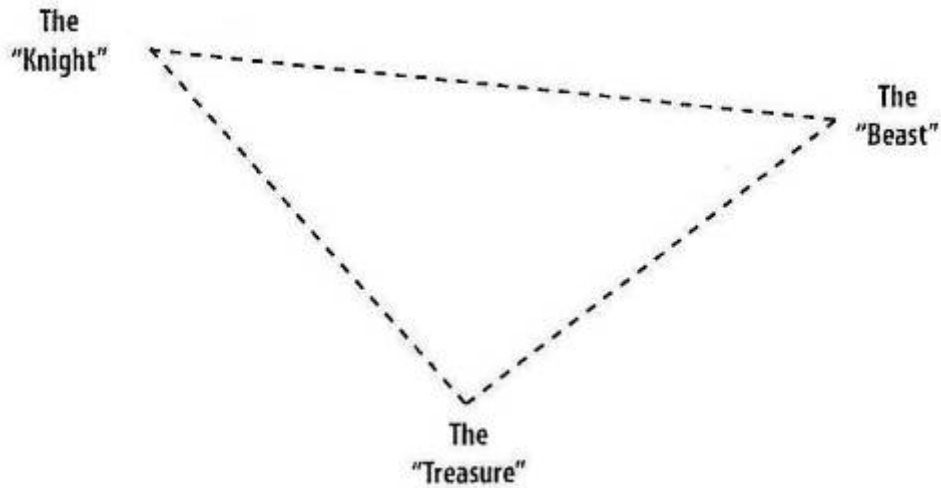
The chivalric language-game is not about ‘Knights’ only<sup>9</sup>. Maurice Keen, who has studied the ethos of knighthood, suggests that the word chivalry “conjur[es] up images in the mind – of the knight fully armed, perhaps with a crusaders red cross sewn upon his surcoat; of martial adventures in strange lands; of castles with tall towers and of the fair women who dwelt in them”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the ‘Beast’ and the ‘Treasure’ – which often appears either in the form of the ‘Maiden’ or the ‘Castle’ – are just as important elements of the equation as is the ‘Knight.’

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<sup>8</sup> Ricoeur 1981, 131-144.

<sup>9</sup> Kerberos, No. 1, October 1917, p. 4. *Saga: Jungfru och Draken eller den unga tecknarens uppgift.*

<sup>10</sup> Keen 1984, 1.



If the proposition that ‘Knights’, ‘Treasures’, and ‘Beasts’ provide an access to the political imaginary of Finnish-Russian relationships during the epoch 1918–1930s sounds too fantastic, it is possible to designate the three iconic elements in different terms. On a more general level, we may speak about the roles of *the protector*, *the protectee*, and *the threat*. We may also point out that the ‘Beast’ brings out the common enemy or political challenge; the ‘Treasure’ stands for what is held worth protecting in the political community; and the ‘Knight’ represents the sovereign agency that undertakes political acts in its name<sup>11</sup>. The latter characterization stresses the significance of these elements for their statecrafting function. They are actualized in order to put forth a claim about the competence of specific groupings to act in the name of the political unit.<sup>12</sup>

<i>model-image</i>	<i>role</i>	<i>function (within statecrafting)</i>
The ‘Knight’	protector	sovereign agency
The ‘Beast’	threat	common enemy, political challenge
The ‘Treasure’	protectee	object to be protected, priceless in the community

<sup>11</sup> Buck-Morss 2002, 12.

<sup>12</sup> The approach has affinities to Buzan, Waever and de Wilde’s securitization approach (Buzan et. al. 1998).

It is relatively easy to identify the three above presented archetypes in a visual form in the cartoons but they also turn up in verbal acts of statecrafting. Consider, for instance, a Social Democratic member of the Parliament (MP) Anton Kotonen's parliamentary address from the year 1919 in which he critiques the Finnish "iron fist soldiers" and their "bellicose politics of adventure" vis-à-vis Russia<sup>13</sup>. To evaluate the persistence of the chivalric mode of imagining Finnish-Russian relations, I have used parliamentary documents as additional research material. On the one hand, the point has been to assess whether the chivalric equation is restricted to political cartoons or whether it can be said to provide a more widespread element in the political imaginary. In other words, my intention was to see whether the genre of political cartoons alone accounts for the prevalence of chivalric figures. On the other hand, written materials have assisted me in appreciating the pragmatic maxim and inquiring into *the real consequences* of the chivalric formula – i.e. into the way in which the *semiotic elements* of the chivalric formula are brought into articulation with *non-semiotic elements* of political imaginary<sup>14</sup>. The Proceedings of the Parliamentary Sessions have been particularly helpful. With the help of them, it has been possible to identify the questions – i.e. topical political dilemmas – that are being evaluated with recourse to the chivalric language game. Here, the focus has been on what in Peirce's sign theory goes with the name of Secondness and presupposes an existential relation or a reference between the sign and its object<sup>15</sup>.

In this paper, I work on the presumption that the key dilemma evaluated in the political cartoons relates to statecrafting. Cartoons evaluate proposed policies vis-à-vis Russia/Soviet Union with view upon how well they contribute to the success and survival of the political unit. They do so by picking up something from the existential reality. Since magazines in which cartoons were published are all more or less intimately related to specific political groupings, drawings can be interpreted as attempts to consolidate these groupings or their representatives as legitimate political authorities and to downplay the legitimacy of competing groupings. This is the aspect of intentional communication in them. In other words, inquiring into the indexical sign dimensions<sup>16</sup> of the chivalric equation reveals that the 'Knight', for instance, is

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<sup>13</sup> Proceedings of the Parliamentary Session 1919, 29 April 1919, 165-166.

<sup>14</sup> Freadman xx, yy.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. CP 2.283.

<sup>16</sup> In Peirce's sign theory, indices are signs whose representative character is Secondness (CP 2.283).

frequently actualized as an identifiable representative of the given magazine's political orientation. The 'Treasure' stands for what according to the given political orientation is argued to be worth preserving in the political unit while the 'Beast' is usually in one way or another existentially connected to their political opponents.

### ***The Political Context***

Consolidation of political authority was an acute question in the newly independent country due to which statecrafting was intense. Developments of the revolutionary year 1917 and independence and the civil war of 1918 had shattered the previous, two-tiered structure of conceiving of political authority. Juha Manninen has identified such a structure in the 18<sup>th</sup> century discussions on Finnish identity. Over and above the *patria* composed of those who had either been born in Finland or because of their residence regarded themselves as Finns, there was a higher source of authority – *communis mater patria* which referred to the King and the realm ruled by him. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Finns' *communis mater patria* was the Swedish kingdom and the Swedish King the target of loyalty on the upper echelon.<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested that when Finland in 1809 became a Russian Grand Duchy, the place of *communis mater patria* simply swapped. Instead of the Swedish King, the Russian Emperor became a legitimate source of authority. Thanks to the two-tiered conception of political authority, it was not a problem for a 'good Finn' to make a career as a subject of the Empire and – to borrow the title of a book by Kristiina Kalleinen – think that "it is the fortune of my *patria* to belong to Russia"<sup>18</sup>. According to this logic, the righteous Russian Emperor had endowed the Finnish political unit with political existence and thus had to be treated with respect. This way of thinking was challenged by German romanticism which came to view of the state as an organism-like entity. *Communis mater patria* and *patria* had to be fused. As Timo Soikkanen notes, "the term *patria* began to attach itself to the people instead of the state or the Emperor. The confrontation became inevitable"<sup>19</sup>.

The demise of Russian autocracy in the March 1917 revolution led to the collapse of the imperial authority over Finland. The former metropolitan country not only changed from an authority over Finland's foreign policy into its object but also transformed from a conservative empire into a Bolshevik regime. The new regime came to promote world

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<sup>17</sup> Manninen 2000; 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Kalleinen 2001; Apunen 2001b, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Soikkanen 2005, 55–56.

revolution and claimed authority over the members of the working class beyond its borders. The Bolsheviks granted Finland an independent status but since the only instrument for enforcement of authority in the country were the remaining imperial troops paralyzed by the Russian revolution, a bloody civil between domestic reds and whites burst out in the country. Paradoxically enough, Finnish independence had been enabled by the revolutionary actions of the fierce opponents of the Russian Emperor, but these same forces came to be held responsible for instigating the civil war in Finland. This internal war revolved around the problem of who has the right to exercise sovereign authority over the independent Finland and the question of authority remained intimately intertwined with the question of Russia.<sup>20</sup> The winning white side conceptualized the internal war as a war of liberation from Russia and accused the reds of continuing to acquiesce to Russian influence. In their view, it seemed that the two-pronged structure of political authority persisted – *communis mater patria* and *patria* had not been fused.

Since political authority had been badly shattered in these developments, consolidation of a new source of authority became a burning issue in the independent, post-civil war Finland. This situation can be aptly characterized with the help of the notion of *irritation* which in Charles S. Peirce's pragmatism refers to moments at which old beliefs and habits of mind no longer succeed in guiding action<sup>21</sup>. Irritation brings about an irruption in the habitual, symbolically sustained course of life – i.e. it sets off the process of political imaginary. Old habits become modified in acts of symbolisation geared at re-establishing the equilibrium lost by the dissolution of old markers of certainty. That is, semiotic and non-semiotic elements are brought into articulation with one another in a new way. The situation of irritation likens what Erik Ringmar refers to as formative moments. During such moments, the discrepancy between the actual and the potential opens up a space of cultural and political opportunity. Within it, there is room for voicing out various and varying purposes, and the moment can be seized by alternative accounts.<sup>22</sup> Statecrafting represents one such attempt to seize the moment by presenting oneself/one's group as competent political actors – as 'Knights'.

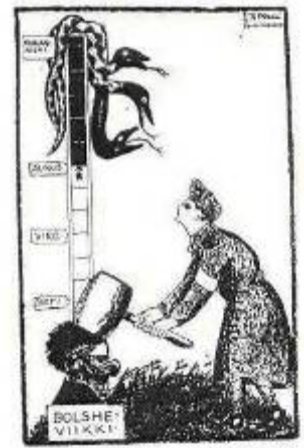
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<sup>20</sup> E.g. Alapuro 1988.

<sup>21</sup> CP 5.374–5.375.

<sup>22</sup> Ringmar 1996, 456.

Now, let us keep this in mind and return to the treatment of the “iron fist soldier” by Anton Kotonen. It is best analyzed as a part of the political debate over whether the raids that some Finns had made across the Eastern border into Russian Karelia and that were at least partly motivated by the dream of territorial expansion actually contributed to the well-being of the Finnish political unit. It is a counterargument to the type of reasoning which the *Tuulispää* magazine’s cartoon on the right represents<sup>23</sup>. The drawing brings the interventions across the border out as virtuous political conduct. In it, British policy of discouraging the Finns from making interventions across the border is embodied in the form an anti-chivalric character while a representative of the Finnish right-wing activists is brought out as a chivalric figure capable of dealing with the ‘Beast’ of Bolshevism. This interpretation is available for us in the sign aspects; iconic sign features suggest a connection to the chivalric language game while indexical aspects enable pointing out how it is actually made a use of for the purposes of statecrafting.



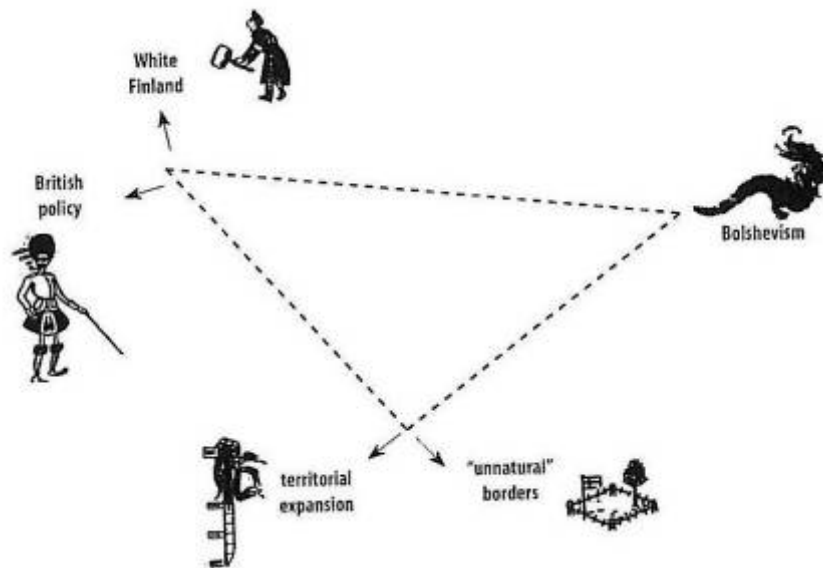
By pointing out in his speech that such a proactive (“adventurous”) policy vis-à-vis the eastern neighbour did not qualify as skilled statecraft, Kotonen seeks to challenge the entitlement of the right-wing groups to the position of political authority. Similarly, the cartoons are best examined as parts and parcels of such developments. The question over Russian/Soviet neighbourhood makes a part of competing solutions to the dilemma of securing the durability of the Finnish political unit. Statecrafting is an attempt to put one’s truth at the centre of political life and marginalize the truth of others<sup>24</sup>.

The passage also indicates that the historically contingent meaning of statecraft emerges out the way in which elements of political imaginary come together in specific situations. The chivalric equation is an experiential schema which has been handed down by tradition and which crops up in varying historical and political contexts. The way in which the habitually available formula turns up in different contexts testifies to

<sup>23</sup> Tuulispää, No. 20, Vol. 17, 1919, p. 5. *Bolsheviikikäärme*.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Moisio 2003, 9.

the creative dimension of political imaginary. It sustains the pragmatistic characterization of political imaginary as a process which revolves around the poles of habituality and creativity. Hence conceived, Kotonen’s speech and *Tuulispää*’s drawing each represent possible ways of actualizing the habitually available chivalric formula. They serve as a reminder of the fact that taking the creative dimension into account saves political imaginary from sinking into “a necrology of meaningless discourses”<sup>25</sup> and emphasizes its character as a living tradition. The diagram below seeks to capture the way in which *Tuulispää* makes a use of the chivalric equation for the purposes of statecrafting.



Creativity is indebted to the fact that the three archetypical model-images of the Finnish political imaginary on Russia are like “shifters” of which context-sensitive personal pronouns like “you” or “we” are paradigmatic examples. Referential ambiguity is characteristic of shifters, which suggests that determining their meaning cannot be accomplished within the context of the message but requires attention to the situation in which the message is uttered<sup>26</sup>. The type of situation that I have in mind is the moment of irritation as characterized by Charles S. Peirce’s in his pragmatism. Moreover, Peirce’s sign theory provides suitable tools for analyzing and interpreting the process of signification which seeks to solve the irritation caused by the unexpected and necessarily does so on the basis of earlier knowledge and experience. Peirce’s sign

<sup>25</sup> Ricoeur 1981, 161.

<sup>26</sup> Weldes 1999, 106.

theory has this capacity since it is indebted to the pragmatist metaphysics which conceives of the mind-independent reality as a dynamic aspect that motivates but does not determine signification. Mind-independent or non-semiotic elements of political imaginary provide a “chaotic stream of occurrences” that propels the process of signification in which objects emerge<sup>27</sup>.

Peirce suggests that inquiring into *the indexical elements of signs* – i.e. signs that retain within themselves traces of genuine existential connection with reality<sup>28</sup> – is one way of bringing the interplay of semiotic and non-semiotic elements to focus. In the context of this work this means that although the ‘Knight’ might at first call to mind the right-wing Activists<sup>29</sup>, this chivalric figure cannot be simply equated with the Activist tradition in Finnish-Russian relationships. As the above juxtaposition of Anton Kotonen and the cartoon published in the *Tuulispää* magazine testifies, the model-image of the chevalier may just as well be actualized to put forth arguments that are related to capability of other political orientations to assume the status of legitimate authority and undertake acts in the name of the political unit. In these cases “chivalric” conduct vis-à-vis the Eastern neighbour may not be a matter of such pro-active behaviour as making interventions across the eastern border but chivalry may just as well stand for prudence and restraint.

If the year 1918 with the Finnish independence and civil wars both in Finland and in Russia presents a moment of irritation to the Finnish political imaginary on Russia, it is possible to identify another “grand moment” of irritation at the turn to the 1930s which, as a period of aggressive anti-communist agitation, presents a climax of the epoch

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<sup>27</sup> Rytövuori-Apunen 2005, 166, 168n1.

<sup>28</sup> CP 2.283.

<sup>29</sup> With the notion of Activists I have here in mind the groupings of right-wingers who favored extra-parliamentary – if not “conspiratorial” – tactics in attempts to reach their political goals. The Activists’ goals may be distinguished with the help of Lauri Hyvämäki’s distinction of the Finnish activism to three phases. The first took shape during the Russo-Japanese war when the clandestine Finnish Active Resistance Party which was targeted against the Tsarist power was founded. The short-lived grouping drew its organization and methods from the underground revolutionary parties in Russia. The second phase of activism developed soon after the outbreak of the First World War. The activists of this phase held as their objective the separation of Finland from Russia through a military uprising and German assistance and the movement gave rise to the Jäger as well as civil guard movements. The third phase of activism, which Hyvämäki refers to as “post-activism” (in Finnish: *jälkiaktivismi*) took shape in the independent Finland and was intended at securing Finland against Soviet Russia, assisting other Fenno-Ugric peoples, and protecting social order against leftist revolution. The phase of post-activism is markedly rightist because the connections with the labor movement had been shattered as a result of the Finnish civil war. Hyvämäki argues that it is difficult to locate post-activism with any specific group but its phenomena can be found in the Jäger circles, civil guards, and non-governmental organizations as well as in business life and state service. (Hyvämäki 1958a, 277–278; see also Ahti 1987, 10.)

1918–1930s<sup>30</sup>. For the right-wing activists of the White Finland, the anti-communist efforts of late 1920s and early 1930s represented continuity to the unfinished “liberation war” of 1918. They can be interpreted as a reaction intended to carry to the end the uncompleted war against those who, in one way or another, were conceived of as “enemies” of the newly gained independence – i.e. Communists, Social Democrats, and the (Soviet) Russians<sup>31</sup>. The reaction was supposed to end the uncertainty concerning who or what certain sections of the society regarded as legitimate political authority. Motivated by the thought that the years 1918–1930s form something of an epoch, I have chosen the political cartoons to be analysed in this paper from that period of time.

### *Setting the Stage for the Analysis*

Identifying the chivalric language that the cartoons avail themselves of is only a preliminary point of departure for the analysis of the Finnish political imaginary on Russia. It represents the first, *pre-political level* in the inquiry into political imaginary which consists of three scales. The second level provides the pivot of analysis; the focus there is on the ways in which the identified formula is put to creative uses in topical political debates. This can be designated as *the political level*. The third, *post-political level* involves identifying the thought-paradigm that the cartooned model-images allude to. It is post-political in the sense that there is no possibility of choice. Simply put, a paradigm is the collection or class of like elements that one has to choose from; one cannot choose the paradigm but can choose from the paradigm. Grasping the paradigmatic element is done on the basis of examining variation in the ways in which the chivalric equation is actualized on the political level. On the basis of my analysis of political cartoons I suggest that the thought-paradigm of Finnish political imaginary on Russia entails a “Machiavellian” choice whether to conceive of Russian neighbourhood as a matter of good or bad fortuna and whether to regard active or passive (prudent) virtù as the best way of managing it. However, in this paper I am going to leave the “Machiavellian” paradigm with little attention and focus more on the thought that the chivalric language game, which alludes to the “Machiavellian” paradigm, is habitually available in the Finnish political imaginary on Russia. Prior to doing that, let us focus

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<sup>30</sup> We also have to keep in mind the fact that publications of the labour movement were basically banned between the spring 1918 and early 1919. After that, left wing publications were carefully monitored and libel actions were brought against them for “writing against the prevailing system”. In 1920s libel actions mostly concerned publications that were close to the communist movement. (Tikka 2006, 217.)

<sup>31</sup> See esp. Siltala 1985.

on a selection of cartoons and analyze them with an eye on how the chivalric language game is put to use in practical political situations.

### *Actualizations of the Chivalric Equation*

As a key component of the chivalric language game, the ‘Knight’ provides a key to grasping the Finnish political imaginary on Russia. It has this capacity since the ideals of knighthood have persisted as an important implicit element of cultural history from the Middle Ages to the present day. Inquiring into the kinds of transformations that the symbol of the ‘Knight’ undergoes in the cartoon material is to illustrate the key question of pragmatism; it sheds light on how new knowledge emerges on the ground of previous knowledge and experience.

Texts that lay deposited within the symbol of the ‘Knight’ relate to the virtues of bravery, devotion, rejection of treachery, and denunciation of the corruption of the outside world. The ‘Knight’ serves as a convenient “plot-gene”<sup>32</sup> or a mnemonic device for accounts that have to do with skill in arms, self-mastery, obedience, achievement of a given end, promotion of some great cause, and battle against the powers of evil.<sup>33</sup> It is thus handily available for the purposes of statecrafting – i.e. can be actualized in order to elevate certain political groupings to the position of a legitimate political authority. In this task, the symbol operates as a Peircean index; it picks out and denotes some existent individual, thing, or fact as the ‘Knight’<sup>34</sup>. Casting certain lines of action with knightly figures and others with their antitypes – ‘Anti-Knights’ – is a rhetorically powerful way of political debating. An actualized ‘Knight’ is an answer to the question over who can lay legitimate claims to act in the name of the political collective and whose strategy vis-à-vis Russia qualifies as skilful statecraft.



The cartoon on the left contains all the three members of the chivalric equation. Present in it is the ‘Knight’, the ‘Beast’ as well as the ‘Treasure’. The drawing provides a convenient point of departure for an inquiry into the ways in which the chivalric equation as an instance of previous knowledge is actualized to solve the irritation brought about by recent political developments.

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<sup>32</sup> For the idea of plot-genes, see Lotman 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996, 574.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. CP 2.249; 2.283; 2.293.

Pehr Evid Svinhufvud – the leader of Finnish Whites and the embodiment of the pro-German orientation – is brought out as the ‘Knight.’ This is something that we learn from the iconic characteristics of the figure. He appears as a virile character holding his sword of bravery up high to slay the threatening ‘Beast.’

The ‘Treasure’ is present in the drawing in implicit terms; the cartoon mimics Akseli Gallén-Kallela’s famous painting *Defence of Sampo* (*Sammon puolustus*) which is an illustration of a scene from the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. In the legend, the heroic Väinämöinen and the evil Louhi are engaged in a battle over the Sampo which, similarly with the Holy Grail in the Romance of Lancelot, is a mythical vessel with magical powers. It is the horn of plenty that – after a battle over it – endows its owner with richness, happiness, and fulfilment.<sup>35</sup>



Inquiring into the indexical aspects of the cartooned ‘Beast,’ we learn that it points to the Reds of the Finnish civil war. Riding on the bestial bird there is a set of socialist politicians and members of the revolutionary government of the Finnish Red Guard. The conclusion to be drawn from this is this act of signification is that it is an attempt to solve the irritation caused by the experience of the Finnish civil war and the role of Russia in it. In other words, the culturally mediated model of interpretation is actualized in reference to the ideology of White Finland. The heroic battle against “the fall of man, war, and misprision”<sup>36</sup> is depicted as taking place within the Finnish nation, not across state borders<sup>37</sup>. Despite the domestic focus, the positioning of Gylling, Manner, Tokoi, Kuusinen, and Valpas-Hänninen on the bestial ‘Eagle’ contains a reference to the former metropolitan country Russia. On this basis, the configuration develops into an act of statecrafting. It suggests that forces detrimental to a prosperous society emanate from Russia and calls after ways of containing them. The configuration presents an

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<sup>35</sup> For the Sampo myth, see Haavio 1967.

<sup>36</sup> Keen 1984, 9.

<sup>37</sup> For excellent discussion on the problematic of inside and outside in post-civil war Finland, see Alapuro 1994, 1998.

attempt to “normalize” the ‘Beast’ – i.e. to contain within territorial or state boundaries the socialist creed that had no respect for such boundaries.<sup>38</sup>

This interpretation about the Russian connection is available to us if we take into account the fact that Akseli Gallén-Kallela painted the original work for the Finnish pavilion at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. This was a time of troubles in Finnish-Russian relations, and in the minds of the contemporary audience the bestial bird with the claws of an eagle was likely to be associated with Russian autocracy – with its double-headed eagle. Contemporaries are said to have often discerned the feared Russian General-Governor Bobrikov among the soldiers of Louhi.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the image of the ‘Eagle’ had made a composite part of constitutionalist argumentation against the repressive measures of Russian administration during the period of Russification; it was habitually associated with Russian oppression and autocracy.<sup>40</sup> Actualizing these symbols in the political context of post-civil war Finland formed a powerful method of political argumentation. The old antagonism from the period of Russification was projected on the Red leaders who, it was argued, were planning to establish socialist rule over Finland and, in this way, jeopardize the country’s independence. In this way, political imaginary realizes the key pragmatist idea of previous experience providing a background for the emergence of new knowledge.

When the domestic reds were associated with a Russian threat, it became easy to cast them outside the political community. These “unpatriotic elements” became assimilated with the forces of chaos and the ‘Knights’ of White Finland were brought out as guardians of order within. Depicting political opponents in the role of the ‘Beast’ provided a convenient means for strengthening this interpretation.<sup>41</sup> The bestial model-image functioned as a fitting premise for an argument that had as its conclusion the thought that cooperation with Russians was detrimental to the durability of the political community.

Susan Buck-Morss has convincingly argued that in the Western imaginary, the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 signified an absolute threat since it challenged the idea of control over space as the determinant of sovereignty and rendered the notion of national defence problematic. Buck-Morss’s argument also seems to make sense in the context

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Buck-Morss 2002, 3.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Gallén-Kallela 2006.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Kontinen 2001, 284.

<sup>41</sup> For a similar interpretation, see Siltala 1985, 499.

of the Finnish political imaginary on Russia. Domestic tension was projected on Russia in order to “normalize” the enemy and to view opposition to bourgeois political order as an aggression by a foreign nation.<sup>42</sup> Although this way of imagining the neighbourhood of Russia had its roots in the Finnish civil war, it provides a stable undercurrent to the political imaginary throughout the epoch.



Consider, as illustration, the drawing which *Matti Meikäläinen*<sup>43</sup> issued in Autumn 1930 as an approving comment on the violent actions of the Lapua movement – a right wing anti-communist reaction during late 1920s and early 1930s<sup>44</sup>. The gigantic male with the text “the Law of Lapua” on his sweater stands for the Lapua movement’s demands for action and its disrespect for state laws which were characterized as too weak to preserve Finland from the “red peril”.<sup>45</sup>

Despite anti-communist measures, the communists seemed to be gaining strength and had acquired more seats in the 1929 parliamentary elections. They openly promoted the adoption of Soviet type of socialism in Finland and when Finnish and Soviet interests seemed to conflict, took the side of the latter.<sup>46</sup> To transmit the thought that the extra-legal measures of the Lapua movement were indispensable for guaranteeing the survival of the political entity, the powerful male figure evicting the Communist elements from the country is actualized as an interpretant of the idea of virtuous political behaviour. In contrast to the other male figures in the configuration, he emerges as the ‘Knight’ – i.e. is an icon of proactiveness and determination.

<sup>42</sup> Buck-Morss 2002, 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> Matti Meikäläinen, 30 August 1930. *Kysymys perillisille*. In Ari Uino’s (1991, 338) characterization *Matti Meikäläinen* was an exception among satirical magazines in that it was so explicitly an outlet for the views of the bourgeois National Coalition Party. The magazine described as its mission to promote “Finnish Finland” against both socialists and Swedish-speakers.

<sup>44</sup> Risto Alapuro (2004, 91) connects the Finnish events to developments elsewhere in Europe and characterizes the Lapua movement as the “Finnish variant of fascism.” Vesa Vares (1991, 99) contests this view and argues that the Lapua movement was not fascist but conservative; according to him, it was the traditional peasant culture’s reaction against the changing world.

<sup>45</sup> The Lapua movement demanded new anti-Communist legislation but the proposal was voted to table until the new parliament accepted in November 1930 the “Communist laws” or “the Republic’s protection law” curtailing the freedom of the press and the freedom of assembly. (Proceedings of the II Parliamentary Session 1930, 11 November 1930, 222–229.)

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Vares 1991, 78-79.

The automobile by the border of the Soviet Union stands for the movement's infamous tactic of *muilutus* – i.e. the practice of kidnapping a Communist, a Social Democrat, or a moderate non-socialist and driving him or her to the Soviet border to deliver an outright message about exclusion from the political community<sup>47</sup>. It also brings out that the Lapua movement is not exhausted by ideological anti-Communism. The question of skilled statecraft vis-à-vis Soviet Union lies at the heart of it. That is, the drawing is best interpreted as a juxtaposition of two different modes of relating to the Eastern neighbour – one premised on the thought of joint interests between Finland and the USSR and the other geared at actively containing its influences. Its point is not ideological or national (i.e. 'Finland' vs. 'Soviet Union'). This is also evident in the way in which the chivalric formula is actualized. Knightly qualities are assigned to the figure that simultaneous with evicting the communist from the country also gets rid of the Soviet elements – i.e. the figure with the symbol of the sickle and the hammer on the back of his coat.

The statecraft interpretation is bolstered by the fact that in addition to the 'Knight' of Lapua and his Communist opponent, the configuration includes a third figure which stands for yet another mode of conceiving of (Soviet) Russian neighbourhood. Positioned on the background with a finger in his mouth he brings out the alternative to Lapua's policy of active containment. In historical terms, this anti-chivalric figure represents the Finnish Social Democrats' suggestion that education was the best means of dealing with the challenges that the Communist Soviet Union posed for the Finnish political unit. To send this message, the cartoonist has placed a folder with the inscription "instructions for enlightening" (*valistusohjeet*) in the armpit of the anti-chivalric figure<sup>48</sup>. On this basis, the configuration puts forth an argument that sees *virtù* in proactive measures of containing Soviet influences in Finland and comments critically both on the policies of joint interests and on prudent conduct vis-à-vis Soviet Russia. It is against this background that it makes sense to interpret the Lapua movement's activities as an attempt to bring to an end the unfinished "war of liberation" of 1918, on that basis, to suggest that early 1930s present the end of an epoch<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Siltala 1985, 68-119.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. the Social Democratic MP Anna Haverinen's address at the Parliament (Proceedings of the Parliamentary Session 1930, 17 February 1930, 228-229.)

<sup>49</sup> See also Siltala 1985; Vares 1991, 84, 88-89.

Let us now focus on the ways in which the symbol of ‘Treasure’ as another plot-gene within the Finnish political imaginary on Russia is actualized for the purpose of coping with the challenges that the world threw up during the epoch 1918–1930s. As Maurice Keen suggests, within the chivalric language game, the role of the ‘Treasure’ is conventionally played by “castles with tall towers and of the fair women who dwelt in them”<sup>50</sup> This is the case also in Raphael’s archetypically chivalric painting on the right which in addition to the knightly St. George and the dragon features the images of the castle and the maiden.<sup>51</sup>



In the Finnish political imaginary on Russia, the function of the ‘Treasure’ is frequently played out by the images of women and, instead of castles, by more modest houses. The symbol of an unattended home makes an elemental part of the configuration below which features a captivated Finnish soldier and the traditional symbol of evil – the serpent.



Unlike the heroic St. George above who, according to the legend, conquers the dragon and thus saves both the princess and the polis from pestilence, the captured Finnish soldier fails the task of safeguarding what is held invaluable in the society. Instead of the ‘Knight’ the iconic features of this sign bring him out as an ‘Anti-Knight’. Here, the symbol of a small house fulfils the structural position of the ‘Treasure’ and, in this capacity, serves to elicit that the configuration is an instance of statecrafting. Published in a right-wing satirical magazine *Hovnarren*<sup>52</sup> it emerges as critique of the ruling centrist factions and their acceptance of the terms of the Tartu Peace Treaty between Finland and Soviet Russia.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Keen 1984, 1.

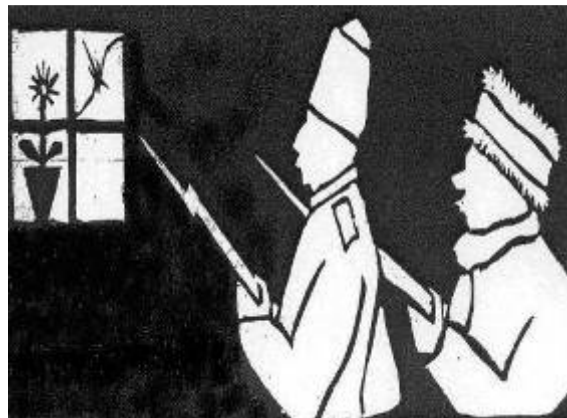
<sup>51</sup> See also Aaltola 2003, 52–64.

<sup>52</sup> *Hovnarren*, No. 2, 31 January 1921, p. 1, *Stå stark...*

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. MP Setälä’s (National Coalition Party) critical remarks that questioned “whether the peace treaty is of such quality that it gives guarantees for safeguarding Finnish independence and lawful

Besides the drawing above dating from 1921, images of homes, houses, and castles are important elements of the Finnish political imaginary on Russia throughout the entire epoch. They actualize in particular terms the thought of the ‘Treasure’ to be protected by heroic deeds. Inquiring into the way in which they so do is to proceed pragmatically, which means focusing on the process of signification which is geared at solving the irritation caused by the flux of the world and proceeds on the basis of previous knowledge.

In the configuration below, the image of a shattered window provides a conceptual linkage to houses as ‘Treasures’ and, on that basis, expresses fears related of disruption of economic and political status quo. These fears were motivated by the joint efforts of the Finnish Red Guard and revolutionary Russians – illustrated in the drawing by two male figures, one identifiable as a Finn and the other as Russian<sup>54</sup>. Momentum to the argument is given by contrasting the comfort and the warmth of home (note the plant!) with the darkness and dangers of the world outside. In this sense, the contrast between inside and outside or cosmos and chaos is brought into play in the drawing.



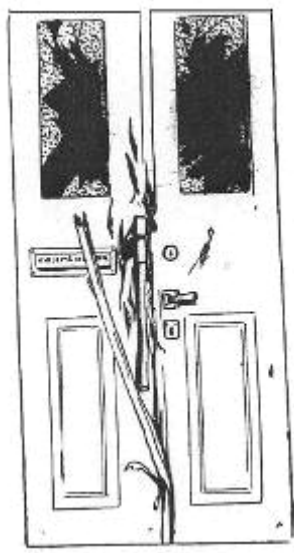
The symbol of ‘home’ and its derivatives like windows or doors are well geared for expressing the thought that in the post civil war Finland, the sense of threat was inherently linked to the question of established social order and property rights. The challenge that is hereby articulated is not a territorial in the sense of a possibility of invasion of a foreign army. Instead, these configurations challenge the possibility of conceptualizing Finnish-Russian relationships simply in terms of enmity between two

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freedom” and the National Coalition Party’s Homén’s argument that the peace treaty was essentially an expression of the “Bolshevik’s desire to weaken our defences” (Proceedings of the Parliamentary Session 1920, 28 October 1920, 1060 & 1 December 1920, 1554.)

<sup>54</sup> Tuulispää, No 5-20, Vol. 16, 17.5.1918. *Suomen vallankumousveisu*. Note also the poem accompanying the drawing: ”It will use a Russkie robber as its guard / Seizure will begin from weapons, a weaponless will be shot,/ And the tears of widows and orphans will be laughed at./ By shattering windows,/ the Hard-workers / Will crown their reputation.”

national units. More forcefully, they suggest a challenge to a certain way of life and an established social order. The question of Russian influence is intertwined with this possibility. The basic tension in these drawings relates to a conflict between conservatism and radicalism or between people committed to the status quo and those seeking to overthrow it.



Something to this extent is present in the image of a violently shattered door which was published in the bourgeois magazine *Ampiainen* in August 1918 with the title *The Socialist Society*<sup>55</sup>. The symbol of a violently crushed provided a convenient means for stripping of legitimacy the socialists' demands for social change. It serves to script the civil war as a battle where the largely middle class based white guards defended the interests of bourgeoisie, land owners, and industrialists against the revolutionary aims of the labour movement.<sup>56</sup>

The image of a broken door is particularly well suited for this task since it visually expresses a lack of mutual recognition and acceptance of property rights that private property as an institution is premised on. In historical terms, it can be interpreted as an answer to the dilemma that the Communists' presented for the bourgeoisie. In the 1918 party programme of the Finnish Communist Party (SKP) it was explicitly stated that the aim was to destroy the bourgeois state, take all the power to the hands of the working class and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat which also involved forced acquisition of all the property and land<sup>57</sup>. Even if the party programme as such was not familiar to the bourgeoisie, this mode of thinking could easily be found on the pages of left-wing newspapers<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ampiainen*, No. 20, p. 11. *Sosialistinen yhteiskunta*.

<sup>56</sup> For a verbal formulation of the thought that the reds aimed at a redistribution of property, see e.g. the Swedish People's Party's Hjalmar Procopé's parliamentary address: "to win over the money of the Finnish bourgeoisie and peasantry, that is the innermost goal of this movement. ... All the power will go to the proletariat and the ownership of the land will be taken away from both big and small landowners." (Proceedings of the Parliamentary Session 1919, 23 July 1919, 1075.)

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Hakalehto 1964, 38–39.

<sup>58</sup> Vares 1991, 38.

The sense of danger is aggravated by the fact that until the autumn 1920, Finland remained in an “interim state”. Some 80,000 red guard members were imprisoned as political detainees, a large amount of former red guardists and other “politically unreliable citizens” were thought to be still hiding from the authorities<sup>59</sup>. The threat of revolution seemed to persist in the newly independent nation. This thought is explicitly expressed in a report which a hard line civil guard activists produced in April 1919: “the secret preparations of ‘our reds’ are becoming more and more widespread and gain more support week after week. ... something awful is about to happen”<sup>60</sup>.



Liberation of the red prisoners added to the sense of uncertainty and the chivalric equation was actualized to make sense of it. Here, again, the unexpected was made sense of against the background of previous knowledge. In July 1919, the *Hovnarren*<sup>61</sup> magazine called to mind the inability to resist the ‘Beast’ in a drawing which was a comment on the parliamentary discussion on granting amnesty for those who remained imprisoned for the sake of their participation in the 1918 “red rebellion”.

Representatives of the centrist government argued that granting amnesty amounted to good statecraft; integration of the reds into the Finnish society was indispensable for national consolidation<sup>62</sup>. On the political right, however, amnesty was characterized as bad statecraft. The configuration below spells this out explicitly. Leniency with respect to domestic reds seems to leave the door open for the Russian ‘Beast’. The configuration consists of a Finnish soldier – a representative of the official Finland – so absorbed in reading a newspaper with the inscription “amnesty” on it that he completely ignores the two malevolent appearing male figures. The soldier emerges as an ‘Anti-Knight’. Amnesty can thus be held responsible for casting in jeopardy the survival of the political form of life.

<sup>59</sup> Tikka 2006, 25, 30.

<sup>60</sup> Cit. Tikka 2006, 35-36.

<sup>61</sup> Hovnarren 12-13, vol. 2, 24 July 1919, p. 7. *Bolshevikerna och vi*.

<sup>62</sup> See Proceedings of the Parliamentary Session 1919, 23 July 1919, 1059-1080.

On this basis, the configuration develops into an argument that that Soviet Russia – expansive in character – would try to re-conquer Finland. To emphasize this idea, the cartoonist has clad the representative of the Soviet Russia in traditional Russian peasant clothing which is laden with cultural memory. During the period of Russification, it was used to represent the extreme Russian nationalists who were held responsible for attempts of eliminating the special, autonomous status of the Finnish Grand Duchy and fuse it seamlessly into the multinational empire<sup>63</sup>. By activating such cultural memory, the cartoon emerges as an argument that granting official pardon to the reds would open the door for the Russian efforts of re-conquering Finland<sup>64</sup>.

The short analysis above focused on how the identified chivalric equation or language game is actualized for the purposes of coping with the challenges that changing political situations throw up. It was motivated by a central question of pragmatism – i.e. how new knowledge emerges on the basis of previous experience. In the section that follows, I elaborate more on detail, from the point of view of social theory, what it means to characterize political imaginary in pragmatistic terms.

### *Political Imaginary à la Pragmatism*

This final section revisits the notion of political imaginary from the point of view of the pragmatist social theory and theory of action. I turn to pragmatism in order to discuss following kinds of questions: Although political cartoons issue from the pens of individual cartoonists, how may we treat them as something else than aggregate effects of individual actions? How can we, at the same time, avoid viewing of political imaginary as a determinate outcome of social structures which lacks any effort at intentional communication? Both these questions revolve around the classical dilemma of social theory, i.e. how to account for order and coherence of social life – something that has been presupposed in the question what ‘observing Russia as Finns’ actually means.

To talk about political imaginary in these terms is to promulgate a distinct social ontology, one which sees the social and the political as a field of embodied and

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<sup>63</sup> E.g. Immonen 1987; Valenius 2004; for policies of Russification, see e.g. Polvinen 1995.

<sup>64</sup> See e.g. the Swedish People’s Party’s Hjalmar Procopé’s argument according to which the reds aim was to attribute “[a]ll the power ... to the proletariat and the ownership of the land will be taken away from both big and small landowners. ... Finland will become a Soviet republic and will be united to the Russian soviet republic.” (Proceedings of the Parliamentary Session 1919, 23 July 1919, 1075.)

interwoven practices cohering around the habit concept. To emphasize practices is, on the one hand, to seek to free activity from the grasp of determining social structures and systems. On the other it is to question the status of individual actions as key building blocks of social phenomena.<sup>65</sup> In this capacity, practices also serve to contest Martin Hollis and Steve Smith's claim that International Relations will eternally be made up of "two stories" – an "internalist account" of individual hermeneutics and an "externalist account" of structural properties – and that these stories can be told in tandem but never merged<sup>66</sup>.

If we accept that there is such orderliness and regularity to 'observing Russia as Finns' as working on the basis of the chivalric language game presupposes, the next question is what can be held responsible for this order. I propose that an answer can be found in C. S. Peirce's pragmatism's habit concept. At the heart of pragmatism there lies the thought that habits namely are responsible for the coherence of social life. Habits are the "enormous fly-wheel of society" as William James puts it<sup>67</sup>. The habit concept distinguishes pragmatism from related social theoretical solutions that have sought to identify a structural context for human action without reducing action to nothing but it – e.g. from Anthony Giddens's structurationism. In a way evocative of 'observing Russia as Finns', Giddens characterizes action as a "continuous flow of conduct" as opposed to a set of discrete acts. However, his research programme has been criticized for lacking conceptualization of what actually makes social action cohere as such a "flow". In pragmatistic social theory this task is accomplished by the habit-concept.<sup>68</sup>

Characterizing the inquiry into political imaginary with the help of pragmatistic social theory means approaching it in terms that might find applicability in contexts beyond Finnish-Russian relationships. Political imaginary has become a frequent notion in the writings of IR scholars<sup>69</sup>, but it would benefit from a more systematic and coherent characterization. My proposition is that such systematicity and coherence can be achieved, for example, by approaching political imaginary in terms of Peirce's

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Schatzki 2000, 10, 12.

<sup>66</sup> Hollis & Smith 1990.

<sup>67</sup> James cit. Kilpinen 2000, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Giddens 1979, 55; Kilpinen 2000, 21.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Doucet 2006; Weldes 1999.

pragmatism and the related sign theory. In this sense, the paper joins the suggested “pragmatic turn” in International Relations<sup>70</sup>.

Pragmatism points a way out of “the two-world picture of international relations”; it refuses to draw any dichotomies between the world in itself and the world experienced by humans engaging in their practices and habits of action<sup>71</sup>. This, however, does not lead to transcending the divide by arguing that agents and structures are inseparable because they enter into each other’s constitution. Instead, it is suggested that what we may call structure and agency are distinct strata of reality. It is namely the irreducibility of agency to structure – and vice versa – that necessitates examining the interplay between them. Practices provide a suitable site for such an examination<sup>72</sup>. For this task, convenient tools can be found in Peirce’s pragmatic sign theory which was applied in the analytical section of this paper. Its characterization of sign aspects is well geared for inquiring into ways in which semiotic and non-semiotic elements of political imaginary come together in practices.

Conceived of in these terms, inquiry into political imaginary touches upon the problematic that in the discipline of IR has been approached in the language of agents and structures (the agent-structure problem) or individuals and collectives (the levels of analysis problem)<sup>73</sup>. It contributes to the call for mediate positions between the extreme positions of either all agents or all structures<sup>74</sup>. I would like to suggest that such a mediate position would be readily available in a pragmatistic focus on ways in which unmade primary reality, which as such is nothing for us, is turned into a pragmatically meaningful reality in the practices of political imaginary<sup>75</sup>. What more is, Peirce’s pragmatistic sign theory contains methodological tools with the help of which get to grips with these ways in actual research materials.

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<sup>70</sup> E.g. *Millennium* 31:3; Rytövuori-Apunen 2005; Kratochwil 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Pihlström 2005, 121.

<sup>72</sup> Archer 2003, 2.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. Wendt 1987; Dessler 1989; Carlsnaes 1992; Wight 1999; Wight 2003; Wight 2006. See also Hollis & Smith 1990. The agent-structure problem has two basic sides to it: it essentially consists of a consensus over the fact that both agents and social structures are relevant to a proper understanding of social or political conduct and of a conflict over the best way to conceptualize these entities and their relationships. (Wendt 1987, 338; Carlsnaes 1992, 246.) As Walter Carlsnaes (1992, 245) notes, the agent structure debate “has had many names in the annals of social theory.” It can thus be conceived as a historical development of a number of seemingly intractable dichotomies such as individual and society, action and structure, actor and system, part and whole, individualism and holism, micro and macro, voluntarism and determinism, subjectivism and objectivism, and so forth.

<sup>74</sup> Wight 1999, 114-115; Wagner et. al. 2006, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Pihlström 2005, 113.

Peirce's pragmatism combines a full acknowledgement of personal powers and properties with a full appreciation of powers and properties that pertain to society<sup>76</sup>. It does not reify social forms or individuals but suggests that structural and cultural factors ultimately emerge from people and are efficacious through them<sup>77</sup>. Thus, a pragmatistically attuned characterization of political imaginary does not pit individual against collective but turns to inquire *how* these aspects of political action are intertwined in actual social and political practices. Its reflexive conception of habit provides an interface or a meeting point for the two aspects of social action. Indeed, pragmatism's habit conception would offer a fruitful site for identifying a structural context for individual actions without reducing action to nothing but it.<sup>78</sup> In this paper a step to that direction has been taken by inquiring how the structural element of political imaginary (i.e. the chivalric language game) is actualized for the purposes of intentional communication in the practices of statecrafting.

Pragmatistic theory of action turns on two key notions – habituality and creativity. When examined in pragmatistic terms, political imaginary can be said to contain a *habitually* available mechanism for agents' *creative* involvement with the world. In this paper I have examined how habitually available model-images and plots – e.g. those issuing from the chivalric language game – are actualized by purposive agents seeking not only to deal with the challenges that the world throws up but also to intentionally advance their (groups') position in international relations and world politics.<sup>79</sup> More specifically, I have suggested that cartoons present an attempt to consolidate a specific political grouping or its representatives as a legitimate political authority and to downplay the legitimacy of competing orientations. Such a characterization of the moment of irritation seems legitimate given the fact that consolidation of political authority was one of the key political dilemmas in post-civil war Finland.

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<sup>76</sup> Archer 2003, 64.

<sup>77</sup> Archer 2003, 2.

<sup>78</sup> The suggestion actually comes close to Margaret Archer's (2003) claim that in order not to conflate structures and agency on the same ontological level, cultural systems and social structures need to be analytically separated and kept constant. This methodological trick enables elucidating the interplay between structure and agency. What I refer to as political imaginary closely resembles Archer's "practices of the life-world" that produce and transform cultural systems and social structures.

<sup>79</sup> Archer 2003, 64. This proposition is in line with Alasdair MacIntyre's (1980, 55) conception of tradition which leans on the presumption that sharing a tradition entails sharing a means of making sense – "schemata which are at the same time constitutive and normative for intelligible action by myself and are also means for my interpretations of the actions of others."

### *Habituality*

A key tenet of the pragmatic theory of thought and action is that the tendency to take habits is a common attribute to everything in the universe<sup>80</sup>. On this basis, it characterizes its agents as human beings who go about in the world on the basis of given social modules or repertoires of rules. These habits of mind provide dispositions that grow or evolve when brought into articulation with new kinds of dilemmas. When it comes to the model of political imaginary promulgated in this paper, archetypal symbols can be thought of as one embodiment of such habitual forms<sup>81</sup>.

If this proposition is accepted, it is possible to continue by arguing that the Finnish political imaginary on Russia is habitual in the sense of being generated by the tacit rule-likeness that governs the social or political game of ‘observing Russia as Finns’.

In Peirce’s pragmatism, habituality is given a somewhat formulaic characterization: “a habit arises, when, having had the sensation of performing a certain act, *m*, on several occasions *a*, *b*, *c*, we come to do it upon every occurrence of the general event, *l*, of which *a*, *b* and *c* are special cases”<sup>82</sup>. Expressed in these terms, observing Russia in the ‘Finnish way’ would be ‘*m*’. ‘*A*’, ‘*b*’, and ‘*c*’ would stand for contingent political events involving Finland. The general event ‘*l*’ may be taken to evoke a more general political question of such character as statecrafting.

In a less formulaic description, habits refer to customary modes of activity, patterns of thought, or dispositions to respond in a pre-arranged manner to the challenges that the world throws up. They provide models of action that incline but do not determine the social subject to act in some conformity with the demands of the social field.<sup>83</sup> Hence characterized, habituality provides one possible answer to the question over the ways in which acts performed by individuals can be said to be unwittingly pervaded by social phenomena and irreducible to – although cognisant of – subjective intention.<sup>84</sup> In this piece of research, the aspect of intentionality has been taken into account by examining political cartoons in the framework of statecrafting. I have suggested that it is impossible to understand a political cartoon simply by attending to its conventional

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<sup>80</sup> E.g. CP 1.409.

<sup>81</sup> CP 4.531.

<sup>82</sup> CP 5.297.

<sup>83</sup> Miller 1996, 72; see also Butler 1996, 33.

<sup>84</sup> Colin Wight (2003, 706) illustrates the agent-structure problem with the example of institutional racism. At issue in it is the metatheoretical problem that organizations – in not entire society – may be said to be racist even if individuals upon whose activity they depend were not.

structure but we also have to pay attention to the creative forces at play in the way in which it is actualized.<sup>85</sup>

On the one hand, habits may be taken to account for orderliness and continuity in politics – i.e. for what “Finnish” there is to ‘observing Russia as Finns’. They are composed of institutionalized and implicit rules for action that actors follow without much questioning. William James probably had this aspect of habits in mind in his famous characterization of habits as “the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent”<sup>86</sup>. The idea of habit as a contributor to continuity means that in routine situations, actors rely on readily-available repertoires of action which have become internalized in the course of experiencing similar situations in the past<sup>87</sup>. “Habit,” as James continues, “dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice”<sup>88</sup>. Hence formulated, the conservatism of habits means nothing more or less than the life-maintaining powers of habit – i.e. that it keeps the traditions and practices going.

One possible way of operationalizing this thought in research, is to work on the cultural semiotician Yuri M. Lotman’s idea that symbols serve a memory function within a culture’s semiosphere or sign system – they are mnemonic mechanisms. As embodiments of lengthy plots, symbols incorporate experience from a culture’s past and, in this capacity, prevent it from disintegrating into separate chronological layers<sup>89</sup>. Symbols hence characterized are one illustration of the habitual mechanism within political imaginary. They contain traditions of interpretation.

Since habits touch upon repeated behaviour, examination of any particular situation may easily fail to add up to its criteria. As Marjorie Miller notes, a vine that has a habit of twining may well grow in a straight pattern for some distance but still retain its habit of twining.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, disclosing the habitual dimension of a political imaginary is not possible on the basis of a few illustrations only but requires grasping a more general pattern of thinking and imagining that these illustrations are instances of. In order for the argument that the chivalric language-game provides the habitual ground for the Finnish political imaginary on Russia to hold, it is not required that each and every

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. Yurchak 2006, 22-23.

<sup>86</sup> James cit. Kilpinen 2000, 13.

<sup>87</sup> CP 5.297.

<sup>88</sup> James cit. Kilpinen 2000, 13.

<sup>89</sup> Lotman 1990.

<sup>90</sup> Miller 1996, 72.

cartoon is a paradigmatic example of it. The formula starts to emerge when enough cartoons or other research materials are put together.

### *Creativity*

Habits are acquired through practically conforming to conventions, and this acquisition involves imitation. What is being imitated in the practices of political imaginary are forms of previous knowledge and experience on the basis of which the new necessarily emerges<sup>91</sup>. However, the kind of imitation that the pragmatistic social theory talks about is creative. The characterization of pragmatistic habits as conservative agents is only half the story. William James's little adjective "precious" may actually be taken to insinuate that the conservative coin has a creative side to it. The uniqueness of the pragmatistic habit concept lies in an attempt to overcome the conservative inertia of habituality. Pragmatists can be said to perform a conceptual transformation in the colloquial usage of the term habit and to develop a model of *reflexive habituality*.<sup>92</sup>

Reflexivity implies that pragmatistic creativity refers to an achievement in situations that call for solutions. Habits pass as long as nothing challenges them. But since we cannot stop interacting with our environment, the world keeps on interfering with our habitual ways.<sup>93</sup> C. S. Peirce famously argues that the "whole function of thought is to produce habits of action"<sup>94</sup> but he also suggests that "the highest quality of mind involves a great readiness to take habits, and a great readiness to lose them"<sup>95</sup>. Accordingly, the focus of a pragmatist inspired research ought to be on the ways in which the habitually available dispositional form evolves in the encounter with new types of problems<sup>96</sup>. In this work I have worked on the presumption that the years 1917/1918 present such a moment for the Finnish political imaginary on Russia. Old ways of encountering the Eastern neighbour were challenged, and established habits of mind were put to creative use in the task of consolidating political authority in a country that had somewhat abruptly become independent and where the question . That is what I had in mind in characterizing the years 1917/1918 as a moment of irritation.

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<sup>91</sup> See also Rytövuori-Apunen 2005, 149.

<sup>92</sup> Kilpinen 2000, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Joas 1996; Hellmann 2002, 7.

<sup>94</sup> CP 5.400.

<sup>95</sup> CP 6.613.

<sup>96</sup> See also Rytövuori-Apunen 2005, 164.

Pragmatism conceives of action as a cyclical belief-doubt process which coheres around the actor's habituality<sup>97</sup>. The notion of irritation designates a concrete moment when one encounters an interruption to one's habitual patterns of thought and action.<sup>98</sup> Doubting takes over believing. The moment of irritation begets creative faculties: "the operation of the environment ... goes to break up habits and so ... render[s] the mind lively"<sup>99</sup>. Doubt may be resolved by creative guess-making which Peirce designates as abduction<sup>100</sup>. It involves formulating hypotheses about how an irritating situation might be different from the way it has habitually been understood. In this paper, I have been interested in how symbols embodying cultural memory are actualized in innovative ways in new situations – i.e. how habituality and creativity interact in the practices of political imaginary. In situations that call for solutions, symbols are made to refer to different parts of the world. Yet, agents must keep on availing themselves of internalized repertoires of rules that are based on a rich experience of experiencing similar situations in the past.<sup>101</sup>

Although contingencies – situations that call for solutions – are important for the articulation of the pragmatist theory of action, pragmatism's "natural state" is not abstract universal doubt but stable belief<sup>102</sup>. Doubting everything at once would be impossible since acting in the world necessitates a belief in things. With a revised conception of the way things are, one may return to habitual action.<sup>103</sup>

However, habituality is not a matter of conscious reproduction of a pre-existent object that has been construed as a model. From a pragmatistic perspective, the creative component of political imaginary is a means of coping in the world and advancing one's position. This can be singled out as the Darwinian or evolutionary aspect of pragmatism; it is interested in the ways in which human agents learn to cope with their environment.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, coming up with innovations in problematic situations can be said to be an elemental part of political imaginary understood in pragmatistic terms.

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<sup>97</sup> Kilpinen 2000, 37.

<sup>98</sup> CP 5.374-5.375; Pardales & Girod 2006, 300. Something to this extent is also expressed by Alasdair MacIntyre (1980, 56) who refers with the notion of epistemological crisis to moments of irritation that are occasions for constructing more adequate narratives by reconstructing traditional narratives.

<sup>99</sup> CP 6.301; see also Kilpinen 2000, 14.

<sup>100</sup> E.g. CP 7.219.

<sup>101</sup> Hellmann 2002, 9.

<sup>102</sup> Scheffler 1974, 59; Kilpinen (2000, 406n29) notes that mediaeval philosophy might have had it the other way around. Duns Scotus – the scholastic thinker that Peirce greatly appreciated – held that prudence was "a habit involving true reasoning that enables one to act well."

<sup>103</sup> E.g. CP 5.400.

<sup>104</sup> Rytövuori-Apunen 2005, 164.

Contingencies are central for the pragmatistic ethos. Habits do not unfold in the manner of mechanical necessity. They are best examined in the context of attempts to respond to novel situations on the basis of the seemingly objective demands of the social field.<sup>105</sup> This is why creativity is such an important component of political imaginary. When examined in pragmatistic terms, creativity does not emerge as an unconstrained production of something new. It never takes place without any constitutive background of habituality.<sup>106</sup> In other words, new knowledge emerges on the grounds of previous knowledge and experience<sup>107</sup>. The argument that political imaginary revolves around the moments of habituality and creativity is indebted to this recognition.

With view upon ‘observing Russia as Finns’ it is worth noting that although experience that is embodied in the mnemonic symbols – such as the ‘Knight’, the ‘Beast’, and the ‘Treasure’ – has in the form of habits become a part of agents of political imaginary, it is not strictly personal or private. The past which is embodied in such chivalric symbols is wider than individual experience; it refers to a form of knowledge that in the form of traditions belongs to all the members of the community.<sup>108</sup>

Above, I briefly alluded to Peirce’s sign theory – his semeiotic – as a fruitful extension to Yuri Lotman’s cultural semiotics’ idea of traditions of interpretation embodied in mnemonic symbols. Peirce’s triadic model of sign action is ideally suited for bringing out how potential for interpretation is grounded in habits of mind without entailing cultural closure. When characterized in terms of this pragmatic sign theory, political imaginary emerges as nothing more or less than a process of continuous and reflexive semeiosis. Political cartoons are interpretants of earlier works (i.e. symbols) that have been attuned for present purposes. In Peirce’s semiotics, the interpretant is a new sign that emerges in the process of interpretation to represent the object in question. This new interpretant is best conceived as habit-change; it is not a word, a thought, a decision, or an action but a renewed pattern of thought or action.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Bernstein 1991, 329. The lawfulness of habits is best examined with view upon Peirce’s theory of cosmic evolution which presupposes a continuous interplay between evolving laws and chance.

<sup>106</sup> Joas 1996, 129.

<sup>107</sup> Rytövuori-Apunen 2005, 149.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Gallagher 1992, 94.

<sup>109</sup> Miller 1996, 71, 74.

### **Conclusions**

The paper at hand presents one way of doing pragmatically informed research in International Relations. In it, I have made an attempt to characterize political imaginary in pragmatic terms; I have characterized it as a form of practice that revolves around the poles of habituality and creativity. This has been inspired by a central concern of pragmatism – i.e. how new knowledge emerges on the ground of previous knowledge and experience. I have suggested that Charles S. Peirce’s pragmatically inspired sign theory contains suitable methodological tools for the kind of exercise that this characterization of political imaginary calls for. It is particularly well geared for analyzing the process of signification (*semiosis*) geared at solving the irritation caused by the unexpected. In the empirical section of this paper, these tools were applied on a set of political cartoons dating from a moment of irritation in Finnish-Russian relations – i.e. 1918–1930s. I suggested that the three habitually available archetypes – the Knight, the Beast, and the Treasure – can be analyzed as reservoirs of earlier knowledge and experience. I then focused on the way in which the chivalric language game that the three archetypes make up was actualized in attempts to come to terms with challenges that the world throws up.

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