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## Representations of Otherness in Finnish Culture

### *Media Images of Russians and Estonians*

Pentti Raitila

This chapter analyzes the manifestation and reproduction of otherness in Finnish language and culture.<sup>1</sup> The focus is on how cultural discourses about Russians and Estonians surface and how they are reproduced in the Finnish media, and journalistic practices. I analyze journalistic texts, but when discussing the results I comment on some aspects concerning journalistic routines, especially how sources are used in news texts.

### The Specificity of Ethnic Otherness in Finland

In Western thinking, the ethnic Other has been different from "our people" in skin color and other physical features: he or she is either a person from a far away country, or an immigrant who has a different color or appearance. Ethnic differentiation can be based on origins, history or special cultural features, and the formation of ethnic identities is a continuous process. Ethnic differentiation does not necessarily involve inequality between different groups. However, the ethnic differentiation effected, from the "outside", by the majority group can be a basis for discrimination and concealed racism. Here racism refers to the classification of humans and population groups into "races" on the basis of biological, physical and cultural features and characteristics, and to the putting of population groups into unequal positions in relation to others.

Besides being different, ethnic otherness can have the additional property of constituting a threat, of being an enemy. Aside from constituting an outside threat, enemy images have been based on perceived domestic necessity and the motives of the state; for example in the creation and strengthening of national identity. The enemy image can also be used to legitimize aggression and enhance various political goals (Luostarinen, 1989; Harle, 1991).

Defining racism is both a problematic and controversial issue, and Anglo-Saxon and Western European discussions on racism cannot easily be applied

to Finland. For example, the notions of otherness, identity, and racism, as presented by Stuart Hall and Robert Miles, arise from within the context of colonialist societies. In discussing racism, Hall and Miles emphasize the features of a person's appearance – especially skin color – in differentiating "the other". (Hall, 1999; Miles, 1989)

The situation in Finland is, however, in many ways different, since there is no centuries-long experience of colonialism, slavery or mass immigration. Immigrants represent only two percent of the total population, and Finland's largest immigrant minority groups – the Russians, Ingrians and Estonians – do not much differ from the Finns in their physical appearance. Their otherness is therefore based more on cultural and political issues, and thus it becomes necessary to examine Finnish media images of Russians and Estonians from a historical standpoint.

As I discuss the representation of Estonians and Russians in Finnish journalism in the following, I don't consider the strict separation of racism and other ethnic otherness necessary, because the line between them is fluid. The representation of Russians and Estonians in Finnish culture involves many xenophobic and other similar, if less extreme, thought patterns attached to the Other than blatant racism.

This study attempts to make transparent those routine or hidden thought patterns, manners of speech, and journalistic routines that may renew stereotypes and historical attitudes towards Estonians and Russians. The analysis is based on two case studies: the Finnish media coverage of the catastrophe of the ship, *Estonia*, in September, 1994 (Raitila, 1996) and the results of a media-monitoring project where the occurrences of ethnicity and racism in the Finnish media from 1999 through 2000 were analyzed (Raitila, 2002). Here, I pay special attention to newspaper articles concerning Russians living or visiting Finland.

In my research on the Finnish media coverage of Russians and Estonians I focus on how language, discourses and ideologies are reconstructed in textual practices. Language users build their expressions by choosing and combining material from a culturally common "archive of statements".<sup>2</sup> The central concept in this paper is *cultural memory*, by which I refer to very diverse and contradictory statements, thought patterns and discursive formations that have, over the course of centuries, embedded themselves in Finnish literary and oral tradition, institutions and mentality. The first part of the concept, *cultural*, characterizes well its essential nature: it is not an individual or universal concept, or something that applies to all societies. The latter part, *memory*, emphasizes the importance of history in the construction of linguistic or other acts. Cultural memory contains contradictory elements, some of which can, even for a long time, be latent or pass unnoticed until they are *actualized* by changing social situations.

Cultural memory contains, within Finnish society and culture, the thought patterns and statements about Russians and Estonians that are available to users of the Finnish language. Their use is not a mechanical choice; it is a

question of process that molds new thought patterns and speech habits. Finns do not "inherit" the speech habits describing Russians and Estonians, they join the flow of renewing discourses where every speech act simultaneously expresses and reconstructs cultural speech habits, the "archive of statements" relating to Russians and Estonians (see Voloshinov, 1990: 100–101).

### Historical background

The history of the Finns' image of Russians is largely a history of a kind of "enemy image". At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a period of repeated, lengthy wars began between Sweden and Russia that lasted until 1809, when Sweden was forced to hand Finland over to the Russians. Finnish Russophobia has its roots in the Western European tradition which perceived Russia as an eastern tyranny with a strange culture and heretical religion. This mythical enemy image was reproduced during periods of political and military hostility between Finns and Russians. With the rise of liberalism, nationalism, and socialism in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia was condemned by Western countries as a bastion of reactionary political views and authoritarianism. During this same period, Finland's relationship to Russia and Russians was very different from the situation in the countries of Western Europe. Finland was established as an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire in 1809, and for most of the era of autonomy, the attitudes of Finnish people to the mother country and to the Russian people were friendlier than those of other countries bordering Russia. This lasted until the end of the period of autonomy when increasing oppression led to a conflict between Finland and the Russian government (Alapuro, 1988: 85–100; Klinge, 1972; Immonen, 1887: 38–40; Luostarinen, 1989: 127–130; Tarkainen, 1986: 12–54, 311–316).

Following the October Revolution, Finland declared its independence from Russia, and a Civil War broke out within Finland between the so-called Whites and the Reds. When the victory of the Whites ended the war in 1918, a massive and determined operation was launched to implant anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiments in the minds of the Finnish people. The relationship of the Finnish people to the Russians was politicized: it was largely through the ideological effort of spreading Russophobia and anti-Bolshevist propaganda that the young Finnish state aimed to consolidate its national identity. In contemporary historiography, the Civil War of 1918 was generally described not as a class conflict but as a "war of independence" waged against Russia. The Reds and Communism were interpreted as Russianism, and the social and class conflicts as national and ethnic antagonisms. (Alapuro, 1988: 199–200; Immonen, 1987: 107; Klinge, 1972: 109–110) This does not mean that there were not real developments in the Soviet Union that provided the building blocks for an enemy image. However, in addition to this, the Finns' conception of Russians was derived largely from Finland's own domestic

developments. The Civil War of 1918 had a central place in Finnish collective memory, and the Russians were observed through traumatic memories of this war.

The image of Russia that was created between 1918 and 1944 rested essentially on mythical elements. According to these myths, the Russians – like the Huns, Persians and Turks – represented an inferior race and at the same time a serious threat to Western civilization. A similar way of thinking was common in other Western countries as well, and it was connected to the race debate of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Finland this mythical image was created in close connection with the Finnish self-image, as a negation of that image; and one purpose was to get rid of the stigma of a "Mongoloid race" that was attached to the Finns. (Klinge, 1972: 29-56; Luostarinen 1986: 105-113)

From 1939 to 1944 there were two wars between Finland and the Soviet Union, and the enemy image was reinforced, both through bombings and other personal experiences, and as a result of war propaganda. The end of hostilities in 1944 brought a dramatic change in the Finnish image of the Soviet Union. Attitudes to Russians were politicized in a totally new way. In official government statements and in the mass media, war propaganda and the enemy image were replaced by expressions of friendship and confidence. According to the peace treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union, the main organizations that fostered Russophobia were disbanded and the most hostile criticism of the Soviet system and antagonistic attitudes against the Russians were removed from the public domain. This doesn't mean outright censorship, rather self-censorship and guardedness when speaking and writing publicly about Russians. As is most often the case, however, the consciousness and everyday talk of the people changed more slowly than the public image.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the beginning of the 1990s and the developments in Russia since then have changed the attitudes towards Russians in new ways: they were not the representatives of Communism and atheism anymore. Political "correctness" and caution was no longer needed when speaking about Russians.

The relationship of Finns to *Estonians* has never been as important for Finnish identity, when comparing the relations of Finns to Russians. Moreover, Estonians and Finns do not differ much religiously and culturally in the way Finns do from Russians. Language kinship, the concurrent national awakening in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the shared experience of gaining independence from Russia after World War I were the special features of the relation to Estonians.

Characteristic of the relationship between Finns and Estonians has, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, been the notion of Estonia as a more backward country than Finland. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Estonian nationalist elements began to admire Finland, considering Finland a kind of big brother. The basis for this was the larger size of Finland, its better status under Russian rule, and an independence movement that emerged earlier. The Estonian image of Finland as "big

brother" faded in Estonia in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the Finns continued to regard Estonia paternalistically through a big brother/little brother lens (Aleinus, 2002: 56-59; Lehti, 1998: 88-91).

The interaction between these two nations over the Gulf of Finland was broken when Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. Contacts with Estonians remained limited until the 1970s, and a new era began in the early 1980s with the advent of Finnish mass tourism to Estonia. Attitudes towards Estonians were twofold: on the one hand they were part of the Soviet Union and thus "Russians", on the other hand, they were seen as "distant cousins", though a somewhat lamentable and backward nation. Estonians were simultaneously part of "them" and "us".

At the end of the 1980s, Finns tried to present themselves as a wise big brother that had been able to maintain comfortable relations with the Soviet Union and consequently warned her "little brother" not to seek her independence too eagerly. Nevertheless, relations with the Estonians were very positive at the end of the 1980s. (Jaakkola, 1989; Raitila et al, 1989). Attitudes towards Estonians became more ambiguous after Estonia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. In the latter part of 1980's, Estonians had been portrayed as an idealistic kinship nation that fought for its independence, but after gaining independence they were more and more often described in Finnish newspapers as criminals and prostitutes. This was also a link that connected Estonians to Russians. "Eastern criminality", the "Eastern Mafia" and "Soviet-like" cultural features were associated with Russianism and remained as part of Estonians' otherness in relation to Finns, despite being perceived as kinsmen and different from Russians. (Klin, 1998: 24-28)

### Case 1

#### The Reason for the *Estonia* Catastrophe in September 1994

This multifaceted and contradictory relationship between Finland and Estonia became apparent with the sinking of the ferry *Estonia*. This shocking event also influenced Finns deeply, and brought to the surface fresh and previously concealed idea matrixes about Estonians. The aforementioned multi-layered and contradictory history of the relations between Finns and Estonians, the ideas reflecting kinship, Russianism, Communism, and a big brother attitude were part of the context of the media representation of the accident.

The notion that Estonian seamen were in some way responsible for the sinking of the *Estonia* arose indirectly and implicitly through different rhetorical elements in Finnish journalism (Raitila, 1996: 85-108). In the following, I will focus on how the idea of the guilt of Estonians relates to the handling of the causes of the accident in Finnish journalism.<sup>3</sup>

During the first few days after the accident, there was no official information concerning the cause of the disaster. Therefore the first speculations by

the mass media shaped the images the audience received of the accident. Because of the urgency and limited amount of facts, the journalists' own cultural expectations and news production routines had an exceptionally strong influence on the nature of the news produced during the first day after the disaster.

I have divided the different explanations put forward by the mainstream media for the shipwreck into five different phases in an effort to systematize where guilt was assigned; in reality, the handling of causes of the accident did not proceed in such a straightforward way.

*1. Early morning, September 28: Suspicions are raised about Estonian seamanship.* Before the facts about the causes of the disaster became known, there was talk on television programs and on the radio about Estonian seamanship. This is really all that was needed because in Finnish cultural memory these "seamanship practices" were connected to experiences of the Soviet Union, i.e. to the negative connotations about the "Russian work culture". The Finnish cultural context created a different implication in discussions of Estonian seamanship than would have been the case if it had been English or German seamanship.

*2. Early in the morning, September 28: Shifting cargo, i.e. explaining the disaster based on earlier accidents.* Soon after the disaster Finnish radio news and Finnish News Agency wires released an assessment according to which the cause of the accident might have been the shifting of cargo on the ship. This theory seemed plausible due to the fact that there had previously been several shipwrecks near the Finnish coast as a result of shifting cargo. The ready-made explanation model based on previous accidents strengthened the reliability of the theory both in the eyes of journalists and the general public. First, the shifting cargo argument was repeated on radio and television news as a preliminary assessment and possibility, but gradually it developed into a consistent narrative of the accident.

*3. Later in the morning on September 28 and in the press September 29: The cargo shifted because it wasn't secured.* On the morning after the accident, reporters began to produce evidence to support this theory: the idea of shifting cargo was corroborated by suspicions that the cargo wasn't secured at all, or at least not in an adequate manner. Thus, a human factor was added to the original suppositions of shifting cargo, and the discussion of causes was linked to human responsibility and blame. During the morning hours there had already been discussion on a more general level about Estonian shipping practices, and the idea of an improperly secured cargo combined with the suspicion of a shifting of the cargo reinforced the interpretations that blamed Estonian seamen for the accident.

The Finnish News Agency garnered more plausibility for its theory of shifting cargo by interviewing transport professionals: "The law in Western

countries defining the securing of truck freight is very strict. I wouldn't even speculate how the freight of 'Eastern trucks' is secured", commented one professional. The opposition between "*law in Western countries*" vs. "*the freight of Eastern trucks*" labels Estonia as a part of the East; in the Finnish context it became part of the culture of Soviet carelessness.

*4. At noon, and in the afternoon, September 28: The story of engine operator Henrik Sillaste and its interpretation.* Estonian seaman Henrik Sillaste was one of the first survivors to be interviewed. From the hospital, Sillaste described how he had seen water coming through the bow visor onto the car deck. In some interviews, he said he assumed that the bow visor had broken because of the heavy waves. He did not claim in any of the interviews that the *Estonia* left the port of Tallinn with the bow visor open. But in the news during the first day after the disaster, the story of Sillaste was altered so that, with different obscure formulations, it was repeatedly stated that the *Estonia*'s bow visor was open at sea, which implied that it never had been closed properly.

The interview with Sillaste changed in the journalistic process and dissolved into a journalistic narrative discourse. The ambiguous variations in the representation of the Sillaste story gives room for at least five different interpretations: 1) the bow visor was left open when leaving Tallinn; 2) the bow visor wasn't properly secured when leaving the harbor; 3) the bow visor had been broken in Tallinn but the ship sailed into the storm anyway; 4) the bow visor had been handled during the voyage, and it opened and couldn't be secured any more; 5) the bow visor was broken or opened because of the storm. In the first four interpretations there is, at least implicitly, the notion of mistakes or carelessness by the Estonian crew. The conclusion of the technical causes of the accident by the international investigation commission corresponded mostly with the fifth alternative (Final report, 1997: 171-183). The fifth interpretation surfaced only in a few news stories during the first day, despite the fact that it was based on Sillaste's words. However, this didn't fit as well with the narrative constructed that day; a more suitable version was the image of slack Estonians who left the port with the bow visor open.

*5. In the afternoon, September 28: Reinforcing the interpretations of Sillaste's story.* Similarly, as in the theory of the shifting cargo, the new bow visor theory attained further substantiation and evidence. Different media sources said that the seals of the bow visor were not in perfect shape. Later on, the Finnish News Agency quoted the General Secretary of International Maritime Organization as saying that 80% of all maritime accidents are caused by human error. The most important single factor reinforcing the idea of the open bow visor was the comparison of the sinking of the *Estonia* with the capsizing of the ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* in 1987 outside Zeebrugge in Belgium. The ferry capsized 90 seconds after it had left the harbor because the bow doors had been left open.

The media documentation on the causes of the Estonia tragedy exemplifies what happens when journalism works in haste and in an unclear situation. Journalism functions on "automatic pilot" in much the same way as it did in the production of the first stages of the reports on September 11<sup>th</sup> (see Heikkilä, et al, 2002). This model is typical not just for journalists, but for people in general: when we don't know, we assume. When we assume, stereotypes and cultural thought patterns guide how the pieces of the story are put together into a consistent explanation.

This analysis shows how the media built a coherent story of the causes of the accident out of dispersed elements in a situation where the authorities and experts were reluctant to comment on the causes of the disaster. The process was guided by Finnish cultural memory; it hinted to us what fragments of information were turned into news stories and how these fragments were organized and interpreted. When needed, the interviews in question were referred to in an ambiguous way so that the end result fitted into the framework of a coherent story.

Later, the Joint Accident Investigation Commission of Estonia, Finland and Sweden disclosed the faults and weaknesses of the construction of the bow visor as the technical reason for the sinking of the *Estonia*. Already at an early stage, some specialists referred to possible problems in the car ramps, but such views were passed over in the first reports. Why? Maybe because they did not match the already adopted views of the incompetence of Estonian seamen.

The central conclusion of this case study was that certain thought patterns in Finnish cultural memory were activated which led to the attribution of fault for the catastrophe to Estonian seamanship. The otherness of Estonians was revealed in the accident news by the fact that they were the victims and objects in need of help. The Finns were presented as heroes who did the rescue work, and the Estonians were presented as "little brothers" who still had their "Soviet outlook". The effort of news journalism towards a condensed and coherent story produced, during the first stages of the accident, a point of view which put the blame on the Estonians, even though the journalists constructing this story may have consciously tried to avoid making premature judgments about the Estonians.

At the same time, the Estonians were, after the disaster, objects of sympathy for Finns. Being an object reproduced again the old little brother vs. big brother theme: the Finns were the helpers and the heroes of rescue work; and they gave their support to the Estonians who lacked seamanship and were generally a more backward people.

Indirectly, the reporting of the *Estonia* disaster reconstructed Finnish thought patterns and speech habits towards Russians, such as in the example of one journalist who, pondering the causes of the disaster, wrote that "*the tragedy of the Estonia was caused by a Rushi<sup>4</sup>-secured truck*". In a word, this reveals the negative connotations which blame Estonian seamen, while at the same time activating and reproducing the negative image of Russianism in Finnish cultural memory.

## Case 2

### Russians in Newspaper Articles

This analysis is based on the results of a research project at Tampere University where the occurrences of ethnicity and racism in the Finnish media from 1999 through 2000 were analyzed (Raitila, 2002)<sup>5</sup>. From that data, this case analyzes 195 news articles about Russians, particularly from the point of view of the production and deconstruction of otherness. Special attention is given to the themes, means of expression, and mutual interaction between Finns and Russians in the newspaper articles. At the same time, I studied how the thought patterns and speech habits rooted in Finland for centuries may possibly still appear in media texts.

**Table 1.** The central themes and speakers in the articles where Russians are the central group in the articles (news, interviews, feature articles; N=195)

Main theme of the article	articles in total	no speakers	speakers other than Russians	only Russian speakers	speakers Russians and Finns, no dialog	speakers Russians and Finns, with dialog
1. Crimes committed by Russians	87 (45 %)	30	35	9	5	8
2. Life of Russians in Finland (other than crime news)	31 (16 %)	3	5	12	9	2
3. Shopping trips by Russians, casual labor, etc., visits to Finland	25 (13 %)	4	8	4	5	4
4. Supervision of the Eastern border	10 (5 %)	6	4	—	—	—
5. Reminiscences of the last wars, etc., historical articles	7 (4 %)	1	6	—	—	—
6. Other themes	35 (18 %)	8	22	3	1	1
In total	195 (100 %)	52	80	28	20	15

Table 1 shows the thematic distribution of the articles dealing with Russians. Moreover, it shows how different subjects have functioned as speakers in those articles. The most important feature producing otherness in Russians was the high percentage of crime news in the data. Approximately half of the crime news dealt with smuggling, and the illicit trade of booze, tobacco, gas etc. The rest of the crime articles dealt with drug trafficking, pimping and prostitution, violence, stealing, drunk driving, illegal border crossings and fraud. Articles were for the most part blurbs about criminals getting caught, or their trials, but there were also some longer stories.

The way that Russians were mentioned in crime news was quite neutral for the most part. Even though Russians and Finns were superficially described

to the same extent, Finnish criminals were not usually called "Finns" but identified, for example, by their place of residence or age. However, Russian criminals were almost without exception identified as "Russians".

Naming Russians and Finns on a different basis – the former by their ethnic background and the latter by their place of residence – is one example of how categorization is done according to different criteria. This raises the question of whether naming a criminal as someone from Helsinki labels inhabitants of Helsinki in the same way as a reference to a Russian labels the whole Russian minority in Finland. On the background of different possible interpretations concerning Russians and people living in Helsinki, there is an image of the "*generalized Russian*" outlined in Finnish cultural memory.

Mead uses a term, "*the generalized other*", when dealing with abstract models of roles and attitudes of others in the socialization process. According to Mead, the "*generalized other*" shows the collective attitudes of the entire community (Mead, 1934: 152-163). In Finnish identity and socialization, Russianism has such a central role that one can speak correspondingly of the relation to both "specific Russian others" and to the *generalized Russian other*.

Repeatedly designating petty criminals as Russians links the features connected to crimes to the entire category, "Russian", which in the long run reproduces the "*generalized Russian*". Correspondingly, one could imagine that positive stories about Russians living in Finland may deconstruct the negative features of the "*generalized Russian*". This may indeed happen, but on the other hand, this may not necessarily take place, since it is possible that these Russians are treated as exceptions, as not belonging to a category of "*generalized Russians*".

The "non-crime" articles about Russians dealt with a variety of subjects. The largest theme in those articles was the problems Russian immigrants have adjusting to their new country. Moreover, there were some success stories of Russian immigrants. The articles on temporary visits to Finland dealt for the most part with shopping tours and other tourism. In addition, there were articles on Russian berry pickers and other temporary laborers in Finland.

In some articles, Russians coming to Finland were portrayed in such a way that these "others" were in fact described like Finns. They were considered to be "almost Finnish" because of their Ingrian roots or marriage to a Finn. Tolerance in relation to these Russians was not constructed through accepting difference, but rather by considering these Russians to be "like us". Since they have embraced Finnishness these Russians were no longer categorized as "*generalized Russians*".

In addition to distinguishing between the themes, I also looked at the production of otherness by analyzing the speaker structure of the articles. The analysis of speaker structure is connected to otherness through the fact that in previous studies on ethnicity in journalism, it has repeatedly been shown that the representatives of ethnic minorities rarely speak about their own affairs. The authorities and other representatives of the majority population speak on behalf of minorities. The fact that minorities have a stagnani

role as objects of other people's speech in the news stories reproduces the otherness of minorities in journalism. (van Dijk, 1991: 151-156; Pietikäinen, 2000: 201-204)

The speaker structure was analyzed by separating the actors according to whether they were speakers or objects. The purpose of this classification is to uncover the hidden "power structures" of the journalistic text. It is an analysis of the way the journalist has arranged other people's words: who is quoted, who is cited, and who is presented as a silent actor. On the basis of the speaker structure one can also examine the "dialogic nature" of the speech: how different people and instances appear and speak in the same article.<sup>6</sup> The analysis connected to speaker structure and the dialogic nature of journalism touches upon the idea of *public journalism*, of which one central aim is to instigate mutual dialog between different social actors (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 1998).

In particular, my emphasis was on how often Russians were the speakers and on what kind of interaction there was between Finns and Russians in these articles. One of the analytical tools used in the analysis of the dialogic nature of the articles, is the so-called *contact hypothesis*. Social psychologists who have studied ethnicity say that contacts and interaction between different groups can be means of overcoming prejudices and racism. Even though the contact hypothesis has been questioned within the field, it can, in many ways, be used as a starting point for an analysis. (Allport, 1979/54: 261-282; Liebkind, 1988: 118-138)

On the basis of this, then, a related hypothesis was constructed according to which a dialog and interaction between ethnic groups in the media can create possibilities for a growing dialog and mutual understanding in the everyday life of citizens. While the reception of journalistic texts or their impact on the contacts outside the media is beyond the scope of this study, my focus has been on the dialog between ethnic groups in journalism as an indicator of the role of journalism in constructing a multicultural society. The hypothesis is therefore not tested by this analysis, but remains an inspiration to its design.

The Russians were, in the majority of the articles, mainly objects: they were speakers in articles dealing with themselves only in one third of the cases (Table 1). Typical for the articles dealing with Russians was the monologic nature of the texts: different actors appeared in different stories, and encounters and interaction between minorities and the majority population was very limited.

In crime news, Russians were speakers even less often than in other news stories. Somewhat surprisingly, there seemed to be more dialog between Finns and Russians in crime news than in other news. Formally "equal dialog" in crime news did not mean the deconstruction of the negative category of the "*generalized Russian*", because all but one of the dialogic crime news stories were reports of litigation cases. The dialog was constructed so that the Russian suspect had room to voice his or her views, and after that his or her

credibility was damaged by other speakers' counterarguments or by the rhetorical methods of the journalist in question. The newspapers printed the justifications that the Russians produced for their defense, which portrayed them often in a ridiculous and unconvincing light.

Contrary to my presumptions, based on the *contact-hypothesis*, the dialogic nature of the speaker structure in the articles did not unambiguously contribute to the deconstruction of otherness in the texts. The dialogic articles reciting the district court sessions hardly helped in overcoming otherness. In non-crime news the dialog between Finns and Russians built natural contact in the way I expected, but there were very few dialogic stories.

Above, I have limited my analysis to the mutual dialog between the speech acts of actors. In addition to this, there was dialog based on the layout and various visual properties of photographs. For example, in some articles there was perhaps only one speaker, but in the photograph accompanying the article, with its "monologic" formal speaker structure, there could be Finns and Russians shown interacting with one another. In some articles, the visual interaction was more important than the verbal speaker structure in positioning Russians in an "us" and "them" framework.

Finnish journalism in relation to the Russian people was apparently correct, in the sense of "accurate", but at the same time it was structurally distorted. The distortions arise at least partially from the journalistic routines: the hegemony of the sources of authority that are easily obtainable, the monologic nature of articles, the tendency to write more on crime than on other, potentially more positive themes, and the unnecessary emphasis on ethnic background in connection with crime stories.

To put it a bit bluntly and simply, one can say that the Russians living in Finland or visiting Finland were brought forward in the Finnish press primarily as faceless criminals. They were the objects of news journalism. They had very little interaction with Finns, and a great majority of the rare occasions of dialog with Finns consisted of a dialog between justice officials and suspected or apprehended criminals.

The entire picture is rather negative and based on everyday, routine journalism. With few exceptions, the otherness of Russians in news articles was not constructed through negative labeling or by presenting stereotypes; but the cultural conventions connected to the news genre formulated the presentation of the thought patterns concerning Russians. For example, the crime articles were quite conventional in themselves, and the linguistic expressions describing Russians were apparently neutral.

The politicizing of Russianism and the connection to the Russian threat, which has been part of the old mythical image of Russians, did not surface in the news articles in this period, 1999-2000. Neither did the notion of Russians as an especially friendly and warm-hearted people – as portrayed in the interviews of the Soviet era – appear in the news articles (Raitila, 2004 284-289). The contradictory and multi-accented nature of the thought patterns and speech habits concerning Russians meant that, according to the situation,

some aspects were activated and some left in the background. In August 2000, the sinking of the nuclear submarine *Kursk* in the Barents Sea<sup>7</sup> called forth stereotypes attached to Russianism in much the same way as the sinking of the *Estonia* called forth concepts linking Estonians to Russians: in the stories about the *Kursk* disaster, a culture of lax security, negligence and lying was connected to the "Russian national character" (Leivonneemi, 2001).

## Discussion

Finnish journalism has simultaneously worked as a deconstructor and reproducer of cultural stereotypes in its way of handling ethnic minorities and racism. Deconstructing racist and discriminating thought patterns has for the most part been done through an understanding of cultural myths, which have then been taken into consideration in everyday journalistic work. The otherness of Estonians and Russians has in neither of the cases analyzed been constructed primarily through prejudiced attitudes, but was produced by journalistic routines. The cultural conventions attached to the news genre gave shape to the presentation of the thought patterns about Estonians and Russians.

It would be productive for journalists to be self-reflective in two ways: on the one hand, with consciousness of the cultural myths and thought patterns regarding the subjects of their articles, and on the other hand, with consciousness of the mechanisms of routine work. Both in the news on the *Estonia* disaster and in the press articles on Russians, there were examples of people who subjectively defended Estonians and opposed racism using constructions, which – unintentionally – erected a notion of the guilt of the *Estonia*'s crew or the otherness of Russians. Journalists may be more self-reflective when it comes to ethnic questions than when it comes to his or her own working practices.

The media process of the *Estonia* disaster differed from the articles on Russians in 2000, since in the former, it was a question of "actualizing" the cultural thought patterns in a sudden catastrophe situation. In the news on Russians it was a question of one phase in a long continuum. From the enemy image at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one has advanced through the official friendship policy of the years 1944-1991, to the "natural" situation where neither anti-communism nor self-censorship is regulating the writing on Russians. The articles dealing with Russians in 2000 were not only linked to the Russian discourse in the usual way, but they were connected to the "immigration discourse", to the discussion about the "multi-culturalization" of the Finnish society.

The media texts dealing with Russians and the disaster of the *Estonia* can also be looked at in relation to the construction of Finnish identity. In both cases, journalism built up attitudes of superiority in Finns towards Estonians

and Russians. It was very obvious in the case of the *Estonia* disaster. In the news material dealing with Russians, the superiority of the Finns was brought forward via the totality of the articles where *generalized Russism* was constructed, on the one hand, from the large amount of crime news and, on the other, the "tolerant" articles where Russians were objects of Finnish benevolence.

#### Notes

1. The article is based on my dissertation on the same subject (Raitila, 2004).
2. The term is based on the idea by Foucault (1989: 128-130 and 1978: 14) of the "archive" between the language system and speech (see also Hall, 1999: 107-109; Said, 1985: 41). When talking about archaeology of discourses and archive of statements, Foucault stresses that he is interested in "the conditions of the discourse's manifest appearance", in "the transformations which they have effectuated" and in "the field where they coexist, remain and disappear". He would like to "seek in the discourse not its laws of construction, as do the structural methods, but its conditions of existence". (Foucault, 1978: 14-15)
3. There were similar features in the way that the Swedish media dealt with the responsibility and blame of the Estonians (Hedman, 1996: 59-62; Frid, 1996: 131-142; Nowak et al, 1996: 119-128, 186-190). Here I will, however, concentrate solely on Finnish journalism. The analysis is based on the media data of September 28-29th in 1994 which involves all material concerning the Estonia catastrophe of all national TV and radio channels and six major Finnish newspapers.
4. Ruski ("Ryssät") in Finnish is an old Finnish expression for Russians that has strong negative connotations.
5. The media data in this study involves 17 major Finnish newspapers (2789 different articles and in 261 articles the Russians were main foreigner group). In this paper, I am not analyzing opinion articles but only news items, interviews and other news stories dealing with Russians (195 items).
6. In Table 1, we have a description of how the news items were divided into five groups: 1) news without speakers; 2) news where the speakers were not Russians; 3) news where the speakers were only Russians; 4) news where the speakers were Finns and Russians but there was no dialog between them; 5) news where the speakers were Finns and Russians and there was dialog between them.
7. The news on the sinking of the *Kursk* was not part of my research material, since this material covered only articles dealing with Russians in Finland.

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### III. Mechanisms of Identity

