

An Upstart Nation

The Finnish National Character and Modernity in the
Writings of Pentti Linkola and Timo Hännikäinen's *Hysterian*
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Antti Ahmala

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Introduction

This chapter explores the interpretation of the Finnish national character and its tenuous relationship with modernity in the works of two essayists, Pentti Linkola (1939–2020) and Timo Hännikäinen (b. 1979), who can both be described as far-right cultural critics. I begin by introducing Linkola and Hännikäinen as public figures and authors. At this point, the chapter goes beyond literary studies by discussing how Linkola and Hännikäinen are involved in shaping today’s Finnish far-right movements, emotional communities that draw a large proportion of their energy from negative feelings towards ethnic Others. I then proceed by relating Linkola’s and Hännikäinen’s worldviews and political positions to the history of Western antimodern thought, which is a key context for the interpretation of the authors, particularly Hännikäinen.¹ My understanding of antimodernism as a cultural, political and literary phenomenon is based on my reading of several theoretical sources, Antoine Compagnon’s (2005) and T J Jackson Lears’ (1994) studies and Peter King’s (2016) normative conception ranking as the most important ones. After setting this interpretative context, I analyse some of Linkola’s texts and devote special attention to Hännikäinen’s book *Hysterian maa* [Land of Hysteria], (= *HM*, 2013), which presents an analysis of Marko Tapio’s two *Arktinen hysteria* novels [Arctic Hysteria] (1967–1968).²

Linkola is domestically a highly influential thinker, a celebrity figure of the late 20th and early 21st centuries and a ‘grand old man’ of Finnish essay writing. Hännikäinen is one of the many essayists of the younger generations who have been influenced by Linkola, in his case in terms of both style and content. Somewhat like Linkola, he is also a notorious provocateur, with a much more negative public image, although he began his literary career as an appreciated poet and translator.³

Linkola’s and Hännikäinen’s texts are often marked by a provocative, angry attitude and style, typically laced with irony. This sort of *vitupération* is a typical feature of antimodernism in literature (see Compagnon 2005, 137–154). However, Linkola’s and Hännikäinen’s texts include a wide variety of different style registers.

In Linkola’s case, I analyse his essay ‘Mietteitä ja muistoja vanhasta sivistyneistöstä – näkökulma vuosisadan aatehistoriaan’ [Thoughts and Memories Concerning the Old Intelligentsia – a Perspective on the Ideological History of a Century] as a key text expressing Linkola’s outright contemptuous attitude towards the working class, a demographic group that is often deemed representative of the character of the nation. The text was originally published in the cultural magazine *Hiidenkivi* in 2001, and it

¹ I have previously analysed antimodern thoughts and sentiments in three articles dealing with the essayists Linkola, Antti Nylén (b. 1973) and Volter Kilpi (1874–1939) (Ahmala 2018, 2020a and 2020b).

² Tapio’s novels are analysed in Chapter II in this book.

³ Hännikäinen has completed a Master of Arts degree at the University of Helsinki, majoring in Finnish literature.

appears in Linkola's last essay collection *Voisiko elämä voittaa – ja millä ehdoilla* (2004, transl. *Can Life Prevail? A Radical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* 2009).⁴

The concept of national character has been abandoned in scholarly discourses, but in my view the words capture the way Linkola, the narrator of Marko Tapio's *Arktinen hysteria* novels and Hännikäinen generalise about the nature of the Finnish people. Workers or peasants as 'basic Finns'⁵ are traditionally those who represent Finnishness in art, literature and nationalist discourse. Linkola's and Hännikäinen's views of the typical Finnish person and the character expressed by him or her are often not flattering. Still rather interestingly, both authors are widely appreciated by far-right nationalists, especially at the extreme end of the far-right spectrum.

I distinguish between the radical right and the extreme right based on Cas Mudde's (2019) concepts. The far right encompasses both radical right populist parties such as the Sweden Democrats and the Finns Party and, on the other hand, extreme right movements that are opposed to democracy and aim to overthrow it, often through violence. The extreme right involves antimodern ideas concerning society and human nature, a strong critique of capitalism, globalization and the post-industrial consumer society, as well as ecological dispositions that are usually absent from and even despised in populist right-wing politics.

The chapter draws attention to antimodern thoughts and sentiments expressed in the imagining of the Finnish nation in Linkola's texts and Hännikäinen's *Hysterian maa*. Hännikäinen's reading of Marko Tapio is to a large extent biographical: he sees the novels as profoundly personal, reflective of Tapio's troublesome relationship with his personal and family history, the short history of Finland as a nation and the modern world at large (see *HM*, 16–17). A central point in my argumentation is that Hännikäinen's reading is also idiosyncratic: it resonates with Hännikäinen's own brand of right-wing antimodern thought and sensibility, which on the most abstract level is premised on a pessimistic view of humanity. Tapio and Linkola are both important authors in Hännikäinen's personal literary canon, in which antimodernism stands out as one central thematic core.⁶ I argue that Hännikäinen's *Hysterian maa* and Linkola's texts express different yet convergent aspects of the antimodern experience, which involves a view of modern life as banal. Hännikäinen's reading of Tapio is informed by his personal theory of the antimodern and especially its right-wing forms, which he has dwelled on since before his first essay collection. Other kinds of readings are

⁴ The essay is not featured in the partial English translation of the collection, published in 2009 by the Budapest-based far-right publisher Arktos Media with the title *Can Life Prevail?* Many essays have been omitted from the collection since, according to the translator, they deal mainly with Finnish domestic issues. From the point of view of this article, these are some of the most interesting essays in the volume. In general, Linkola's thinking is very much rooted in the national cultural and natural landscape.

⁵ The right-wing populist Finns Party's Finnish name *Perussuomalaiset* translates roughly as 'Basic Finns', a concept that highlights the party's populist tendencies.

⁶ Hännikäinen (2023) lists in his blog 100 works of literature – only one from each author – that he considers important for him.

naturally possible and have been suggested. They may, for instance, pay more attention than Hännikäinen does to the ambivalence, polyphony and irony in Tapio's novels. In particular, they may interpret differently the relationship between Tapio the author, or the implied author, and the narrator of the novels, Harri Björkharry. The novels can be interpreted as containing right-wing antimodern ideas and sentiments, yet it is not at all clear whether they should be attributed to Tapio or even the implied author. Pirjo Lyytikäinen (2020) has interpreted the narrator of Tapio's novels as unreliable. This interpretation, with which I concur, challenges Hännikäinen's view that the novels are deeply personal and his consequent equation of the narrator and Tapio the author.

Similar to Linkola's essay 'Mietteitä ja muistoja vanhasta sivistyneistöstä', Marko Tapio's novels can be interpreted as challenging the positive view of working-class Finns presented in Väinö Linna's (1920–1992) novel trilogy *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* (1959, 1960 and 1962, transl. *Under the North Star* 2001–2003) and his war novel *Tuntematon sotilas* (1954, transl. *The Unknown Soldier* 1957), as Matti Kuhna has argued in his dissertation study (2004). Hännikäinen's reading of Tapio similarly points out the character narrator's negative view of the plebeian masses, yet in Hännikäinen's interpretation the dark side of the national character is also embraced as part of oneself. In Hännikäinen's reading, Arctic hysteria, as it is composed into words by Tapio, represents a special northern form of the irrational core of human nature, which continues to shape history even though modern man's rationalist hubris persists. The primitive energy of Arctic hysteria becomes a source of authenticity and a way of transcending the dull, tame and emasculated aspects seen in contemporary reality. Thus, antimodern thought as it is understood here is very much concerned with affects and emotions. It conceives human beings in general and the Finnish people in a particular way as fundamentally primitive, affect-driven creatures. According to Hännikäinen, Tapio presents the affective core of the Finnish national character as epitomized in Arctic hysteria.

This chapter deals with essays, a highly varied and fluid literary genre that operates on the blurry boundaries between fact and fiction. One should distinguish between three 'actors' in an essay: the author as a flesh and bones person, the essay's speaker, sometimes referred to alternatively as the narrator, and the implied author, that is, the view of the author as it is constructed by the reader based on the 'blueprints' written by the 'actual' author. The significance and implications of these distinctions vary among different essayists and types of essays. When there seems to be some kind of polyphony at play in an essay, perhaps in the form of ambivalence or irony, then it may be practical to refer to the speaker as a textual agent distinct from the author. More usually, however, referring to the voice speaking by the author's name seems the more natural choice, keeping in mind that the name does not guarantee unity of meaning, the lack of polyphony (cf. Korhonen 2006, 40).

Many of Linkola's essays are rooted in the author's deeply personal experiences, involving especially the natural environment and its degradation in the grips of industrial modernity. Putting these experiences into words, the texts combine affective

means of persuasion, of ‘wooing’ the reader to support the environmental cause, with argumentation based on knowledge about biology, ecological issues and some other fields such as sociology. Despite the generally personal nature of the essays, the texts are often loaded with such bombast, irony, exaggeration and other foregrounded stylistic features as well as contradictions and ambivalence that one tends to read them as the words of a constructed speaker. However, I generalise about Linkola’s views as far as it is possible, keeping in mind that there are a vast amount of different textual ‘Linkola’s’. Timo Hännikäinen’s work *Hysterian maa*, which I focus on in his case, is far less personal than Linkola’s typical essay and is quite different from Hännikäinen’s more confessional works. The degree of subjectivity of the book lies in the ground between a scholarly study and a more personal, subjective essay, the literary genre pioneered by Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592). There is no reason to doubt that Hännikäinen is being straightforwardly sincere and hence no reason to distinguish between the implied author and the speaker. This is due to the aims and the implied audience of the book: it is intended as a (non-scholarly) study of Marko Tapio’s *Arktinen hysteria* novels, even though it is at the same time reflective of Hännikäinen’s own thought and literary influences.

Linkola and Hännikäinen as Authors and Public Figures

Pentti Linkola was an internationally somewhat known deep ecologist, fisherman and author of essays and other non-fiction. His views on environmental issues were extreme. He believed technological and economic modernization was a disaster for the environment as well as culture and the wellbeing of humans. The Finns were a special case, as were all peoples in their own way, due to each people’s special relationship to the natural environment. Linkola saw his northern native country – the most populous one on its high northern latitude – as an extreme instance of industrial modernity gone wrong: a nation of newly affluent upstarts who do not know what is best for them. For Linkola, the (late) modern Finn is “an expensive, almost unbelievably expensive pest of the natural economy, a monster” (Linkola 2004, 334).⁷

Both Linkola and Hännikäinen have constructed themselves as characters in both their texts and public statements and appearances. Linkola was very much aware of his role as a media character and living legend and seemed to enjoy making outrageous comments both in front of the press and in his writings. Since the 1960s, he held an important position in the public imagination, as a personification of stubbornness and dedication and a speaker of uncomfortable truths. One could imagine the ‘dissident thinker’ and fisherman suddenly entering a casual conversation in, say, a service station

⁷ “Suomalainen on kallis, lähes käsittämättömän kallis luonnontalouden tuholainen, hirviö.” All translations are my own.

café. As a legend, he might appear in the conversation as more or less distorted – presuming that there is a ‘real’ Linkola somewhere behind the media character and perceptions of him. For instance, Linkola might be seen as a hermit, but in reality he had many friends, acquaintances and even multiple love interests, as Riitta Kylänpää’s biography (2017) and Anneli Jussila’s (2021), Linkola’s long-time companion’s book show.

Linkola died on the fifth of April in 2020 at the age of 88 years. Many have since written assessments of him as a person, a thinker and a writer of essay-type literature in which style is as important as content. According to my rough interpretation, the assessments can be divided in three groups. Many have focused on appreciating Linkola’s ecological message, his uncompromising way of life and often his literary talent, while a significant number of others have mostly or to a relatively large degree criticized his anti-humanist and, according to the harshest interpretation, borderline fascist views. The third group, arguably the largest one, represents a middle approach: it sees Linkola as an early forerunner of an emerging environmental awareness, while it also considers and, in some cases, empathetically condemns his ethically questionable views. The author and lawyer Jarkko Tontti (b. 1971), for instance, belongs to the second group. He wonders how it is possible that so many people still do not quite see Linkola for what he is: an ecofascist and an apologist for the Nazis (see e.g., Tontti 2021). Representing the first group, author and publisher Erkki Kiviniemi (b. 1945) thinks Linkola was at heart a great humanist whose outbursts were expressions of strong environmental anxiety (Kiviniemi 2020). Similarly, according to the sociologist Salla Tuomivaara, “[t]hat which appears to be radicalism or fanaticism often is distress” (Tuomivaara 2008, 38).⁸ The literary scholar Mikko Kallionsivu’s essay (2021) represents the third group as it rejects Linkola’s anti-humanist views but embraces his fundamental environmental agenda.

Linkola’s writings and public statements, which sometimes made tabloid headlines, included expressions of Nazi sympathies, admiration for different kinds of other totalitarian and dictatorial systems, appreciation for terrorist acts such as 9/11 and calls for completely ending development aid and humanitarian immigration (see e.g., Söderkultalahti 2019). These kinds of statements – whether completely serious or, as they sometimes seemed to be, more like ‘trolling’– increased Linkola’s appeal to the Finnish and even the international extreme right, even though Linkola supported the idea of a world government that would control the size of the global human population (see Linkola 1979, 62). The extreme right has tended to appreciate the general toughness that characterized both Linkola’s chosen lifestyle and his ecological thinking, dispositions that can from a right-wing viewpoint be interpreted as masculine, uncompromising and sincere.⁹ Linkola even suggested a controlled nuclear war using neutron

⁸ “Se, mikä näyttäytyy radikalismina tai fanatismina, on usein hätää.”

⁹ Unlike Hännikäinen or the far and extreme right in general, Linkola himself is clearly not a masculinist in the sense that he would somehow privilege the male over the female gender or masculinity over femininity. On the contrary, he expressed support for a matriarchal system (Kylänpää 2017, 398).

bombs, carefully planned by physicists and engineers, as a possible way of dealing with the problem of global overpopulation (see Finn 1995).

Linkola's elitism and contempt for the materialist, upstart masses that have taken over all areas of society is evident in the essay 'Mietteitä ja muistoja vanhasta sivistyneistöstä', which I treat as a key text in this article. This elitist attitude derives in part from a nostalgic view of the cultural milieu of Linkola's childhood. His father, who died when he was only nine years old, was a professor of plant biology and rector of the University of Helsinki. Linkola's family tree consisted of high-ranking members of society: successful academics like his father, politicians and members of the business elite. For instance, his maternal grandfather, the philologist Hugo Suolahti (1874–1944), was chancellor of the University of Helsinki and the first chairman of the conservative National Coalition Party (*Kansallinen Kokoomus*). Linkola lived a privileged early childhood, but after his father's death, the family was thrown into relative poverty. Linkola studied biology at the university for only a year and began his rugged life as a fisherman in the Finnish southern region of Häme already at the end of the 1950s, a life he never abandoned although he suffered setbacks, including a painful divorce and serious physical and mental health issues.

Linkola began his career as a writer and public provocateur at a time when Finland was experiencing a rapid phase of industrial modernization and urbanization. The country had quickly returned to the pre-war path of economic development, and the war reparations paid to the Soviet Union had played an important part in the growth of heavy industries like ship manufacturing. For most of the time, the Finnish economy was booming for many decades before the deep recession that hit the country at the turn of the 1990s. In this context, Linkola's calls for a simpler, more natural way of life were not fashionable: the country was not supposed to be 'downshifting' but moving forward towards material affluence, the kind of 'progress' that Linkola criticized. Still, many saw Linkola as a beacon of integrity, even a kind of personification of some perceived key features of the Finnish national character. Linkola was seen as honest to the point of brutality, as Finns are sometimes stereotypically presented. He lived in almost pre-modern conditions as most Finns had not so long ago. The whole nation seemed to have moved far away from the 'authentic' lifestyle that Linkola chose. According to Hännikäinen's interesting interpretation, Linkola as a public character and legend was an integral part of Finnish 'national mental hygiene' (Hännikäinen 2021, 190).¹⁰ In Hännikäinen's view, Linkola represented a voice of conscience and as such functioned as a 'substitute sufferer'¹¹ (Hännikäinen 2021, 189) for the entire nation. He fought against nature's degradation and gained the people's admiration, even though in a schizoid way the upstart masses were unwilling to abandon their notions of progress.

¹⁰ "[K]ansallista mentaalihygieniää".

¹¹ "[S]ijaikärsijä".

Though controversial, Linkola's reputation and image in Finland have remained generally positive.¹² Abroad he has been more often viewed as an extreme rightwinger and an anti-humanist deep ecologist, one of several thinkers of this type; a case in point is the English-language, American-based far-right website www.penttilinkola.com that offers a selective reading of Linkola as an ecofascist. Linkola's relationship with the Finnish green movement was troubled. His 1985 speech to the Greens, who at the time were a movement not yet organized as a party, involved a call for a militant organization: the members should sacrifice their personal lives for the cause, show strict discipline and strong physical health; above all, they should understand that the preservation of life is 'a deadly serious thing'¹³ (Linkola 1989, 83). The speech is included in Linkola's essay collection *Johdatus 1990-luvun ajatteluun* [An Introduction to the Thought of the 1990s] (1989). It formed the basis for a radical programme that Linkola (1987) proposed as a platform for the Green movement.

In contrast to Linkola's generally positive reception, Timo Hännikäinen is arguably one of the most notorious *persona non grata* in Finland's current liberal cultural circles, due to his far-right connections and provocative statements both in his books and elsewhere, especially in social media. Hännikäinen wrote *Hysterian maa* (2013) at a point in his career when he had already established a notorious reputation as a provocateur. He became a topic of discussion and debate in the Finnish media following the publication of *Ilman: esseitä seksuaalisesta syrjäytymisestä* [Without: Essays on Sexual Exclusion], his second collection of essays in 2009. In the book, the then 29-year-old author reflects on his relatively poor sexual history from a personal and larger societal perspective. Hännikäinen traces the problems of today's mating culture primarily to the sexual revolution of the 1960s that reflected modernity's broader tendency of eroding traditional values and institutions. People today are 'free' to compete in the sexual marketplace, largely unimpeded by such traditional notions as family values. However, the good things in life tend to accumulate to the few, while many are doomed to loneliness and misery, to what Hännikäinen calls sexual exclusion. Similar thoughts are expressed in today's online 'incel' ('involuntary celibate') communities.¹⁴ Besides being based on personal experiences, Hännikäinen's *Ilman* is strongly influenced by Michel Houellebecq's (b. 1956 or 1958)¹⁵ depictions of depressed and nihilistic 'outsider' char-

¹² For instance, immediately after Linkola died he was described solely in a very positive tone in the prime-time news of the national TV broadcaster, YLE: as a deeply devoted environmentalist and conservationist. Naturally, the mainstream media refrains from criticizing those who have just passed away if their reputation is predominantly good. Linkola's most concrete good deed was the founding of Luonnonperintösäätiö (The Finnish Natural Heritage Foundation) in 1995. The foundation's prime function is the purchase and protection of old growth forests in southern and central Finland.

¹³ "[K]uolemanvakava asia".

¹⁴ Tuija Saresma (2016) has interpreted Hännikäinen's *Ilman* from the point of view of 'emotional communities of hate and resentment' (vihan ja kaunan tunneyhteisöt), as the title of her article shows.

¹⁵ It is unclear whether Houellebecq was born in 1956, which is the official year of his birth, or in 1958. He has claimed his mother faked the earlier birth year to get him into school earlier, as he seemed gifted.

acters who loathe modern life's materialism and emptiness and yet are themselves only driven by the desire for money, sex and sensual gratification.

In terms of its genre, *Ilman* can be described as autobiographical and pamphletesque (see Hurskainen 2011, 14–33). It is intended to provoke. In an oftenreferenced passage, Hännikäinen (2009, 26) provocatively ‘asks’ whether young women should perhaps serve in brothels as an equivalent to the mandatory military service of Finnish men.¹⁶ Antti Hurskainen (b. 1986), an essayist himself, has studied the reception of *Ilman* in the media and online discussion in his master's thesis (2011). The thesis shows how the heated online discussion was directed above all by representations of *Ilman* in the media and the participants had only rarely read the book.

Since *Ilman*, Hännikäinen has gained notoriety mainly due to his public activity.¹⁷ In recent years, he has been active in right-wing nationalist circles. He is involved in the organization *Suomen Sisu* (The Sisu of Finland),¹⁸ as have been some particularly right-wing politicians of the populist Finns Party, including the party's former chairman Jussi Halla-Aho. Hännikäinen is currently *Suomen Sisu*'s second vice chairman. He is also the main editor of a blog-like online magazine named *Sarastus* (Dawn), which describes itself as ‘national and European, traditionalist and radical’ (*Sarastuslehti*). The magazine features conservative and right-wing authors who are collectively labelled under the hypernym traditionalism. Traditionalism in *Sarastus* and elsewhere in Hännikäinen's usage refers loosely to a tradition of rightwing thought that has “radically questioned the principles of the Enlightenment and liberalism's rationalistic and individualistic view of man”¹⁹ (Hännikäinen 2016, 159). Such thought represents antimodernism in its most right-wing form. According to *Sarastus*, the authors of the magazine have different views on many issues but are “connected by the view that society is a union between the living, the dead and the unborn – a civilization which loses its traditions and hierarchies is doomed to perish sooner or later”. This involves a tradition of thought: “This traditionalist perspective is represented in Western philosophy by thinkers like Joseph de Maistre, Oswald Spengler and Julius Evola” (*Sarastuslehti*).

Many, though not all the writings in *Sarastus* can be described as neofascist. They often criticize ‘cultural Marxism’, liberalism and globalization from a position that is more radical than today's mainstream, populist far-right politics. The magazine has much in common with the American white nationalist publisher Counter-Currents Publishing and its associated magazine *North American New Right*, as well as other right-wing publications like *AltRight.com* and the German *Junge Freiheit*. Hännikäinen

¹⁶ Hännikäinen's provocative question follows a reference to Linkola's statement that a brothel should be added to every health care center.

¹⁷ Hännikäinen details his experiences of publicity and the literary circles and institutions of Finland in his tellingly named book *Lihamyly* [Meat Grinder] (2017).

¹⁸ Sisu can be translated very roughly as ‘perseverance’. It is a mythologized core affective ingredient of the Finnish national character.

¹⁹ “[R]adikaalisti kyseenalaistanut valistuksen periaatteet ja liberalismiin sisältyvän rationalistisen ja individualistisen ihmiskäsityksen.”

has contributed to Counter-Currents' website (<https://www.counter-currents.com/>). Both *Sarastus* and Counter-Currents contain writings for example on Julius Evola (1898–1974), Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), the decorated German soldier, author and conservative thinker Ernst Jünger (1895–1998) and Pentti Linkola. *Sarastus* is engaged in 'metapolitics', which means that it aims to contribute to a gradual change in culture and society's values, rather than discussing the details of daily politics.

Hännikäinen's most notorious public act occurred during the midsummer evening of 2015. While drunk, the author wrote derogatory comments on the Facebook pages of the old feminist organization *Naisasialiitto Unioni* (Women's League Union) as well as a support organization for rape victims, *Naisten linja* (Women's Line), prompting his publisher *Savukeidas* to finally end its troubled relationship with him. Hännikäinen has since published his books through a small publisher called Hexen Press and more recently Kiuas (literally 'Stove'), where he also works as an editor.²⁰ Hexen Press has been a subsidiary of Kiuas since 2017. Kiuas has published fiction, critiques of multiculturalism and immigration and translations of works by the antimodern classics Spengler and Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821), as well as Gustave le Bon (1841–1931) who analysed modern mass society in the early twentieth century. Kiuas was banned from participating in the Helsinki Book Fair of 2018 and has not participated since.

Hännikäinen's works are from the beginning influenced by Linkola in terms of both themes and essayistic style. Ecological themes held an important role especially in Hännikäinen's first essay collection *Taantumuksellisen uskontunnustus* [Confession of a Reactionary] (2007), combined with cultural critique aimed at the perceived herd mentality of liberal and leftist circles and the materialism and hedonism of late modern society. Hännikäinen (2021, 181) writes in his essay 'Vaistonvarainen luonnonrakastaja' [An Instinctive Lover of Nature] that when he was in his 20s, Linkola was for him 'a prophet'. However, ecological issues have since played only a minor part in Hännikäinen's writings. Instead, the focus of his critique has for many years been on perceived decline in the cultural sphere, the decline of late modern Western civilization, and on his interpretation of the deepening delusions of the progress-minded left.

The Antimodern Tradition

Right-wing antimodern thought and its history beginning from the time of the French Revolution (1789–1799) and the First Industrial Revolution is a key context for the interpretation of Linkola's and Hännikäinen's worldviews and ethical and political positions. Their texts are preceded by a long history of resistance to modernization. A strong consciousness of this tradition and its analytical reflection is typical of Hännikäinen's texts, while in Linkola's case the connections are more implicit.

²⁰ Kiuas has used the slogan 'Kirjoja aikaa vastaan' (Books against time), which is a direct translation of the slogan of the American publisher Counter-Currents.

Hännikäinen's 'message', especially in *Ilman*, often resembles Michel Houellebecq's pessimistic views of human nature and modern society, and Houellebecq has directly influenced him (see Hurskainen 2011, 9, 21). In one of the essays in *Ilman*, titled 'Kulttuurivallankumouksen jälkeen' [After the Cultural Revolution], Hännikäinen (2009, 142) cites Houellebecq's analysis from *Extension du domain de la lutte* (1994, transl. *Whatever* 1999) concerning the commonalities and connections between the sexual marketplace and the capitalist economies of today's Western societies. Throughout his oeuvre, Hännikäinen resonates with and sometimes even echoes Houellebecq's cultural pessimism. He has edited an anthology of essays on Houellebecq, titled *Mitä Houellebecq tarkoittaa?* [What does Houellebecq Mean?] (2010), which features prominent Finnish authors. A central point of view in Hännikäinen's own essay in the collection, titled 'Esimerkillinen elämäkielto' [An Exemplary Denial of Life], is the relevance of H P Lovecraft (1890–1937) for Houellebecq. According to Hännikäinen's (2010, 106) description, Lovecraft was, "despite his scientific worldview and atheism, politically an ultra-conservative for whom modernization, mechanization, liberalism, democracy and change on the whole represented forces of darkness and decay".²¹ Like Houellebecq, Lovecraft belongs to the tradition of antimodern authors, even though when it comes to science and religion, he is very modern.

Lovecraft, Houellebecq and Hännikäinen are each in their own way critics of liberal modernity, and as such they continue an over 200-year-old tradition of going 'against the grain', the literary and ideological tradition of antimodernism, which is especially prevalent in French literature and which thrived in Europe during the *fin de siècle* and the early twentieth century. One of Houellebecq's controversial novels, *Soumission* (2015, transl. *Submission* 2015), depicts France becoming an Islamic society, but Houellebecq does not aim his cultural critique at Islam but rather at the perceived nihilistic vacuum of secular France. The decay of France and Western civilization is a result of the legacy of the *dual revolution*, the intertwined effects of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution (on the concept, see Hobsbawm 1962). The protagonist of *Soumission* is a literary scholar who has written his doctoral dissertation on Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À rebours* (1884, transl. *Against the Grain* 1926), a key novel of French Decadence. *À rebours* is a thoroughly antimodern and at the same time experimental novel. With its aesthetic and philosophical ponderings and few plot elements, it resembles an essay collection.²² The protagonist, duke Jean-Floressas des Esseintes, spends his time in his chateau isolated from the banality of modern society, contemplating and performing strange aesthetic experiments such as decorating the shell of a living tortoise with jewels. Des Esseintes' decadent aestheticism is not only a symptom of overcivilized degeneration but also rebellion against modern bourgeois so-

²¹ "[T]ieteellisestä maailmankuvastaan ja ateismistaan huolimatta yhteiskunnallisilta näkemyksiltään äärikonservatiivi, jolle modernisaatio, koneistuminen, liberalismi, demokratia ja kaikkinaisen muutos edustivat pimeyden ja rappion voimia."

²² Similar to Huysmans' *À rebours* or for instance some of Dostoyevsky's works, Houellebecq's novels too have an 'essayistic' quality, as Hännikäinen remarks in his essay (Hännikäinen 2010, 103).

ciety, particularly its emphasis on rationality and practicality. Paradoxically, art and aesthetic contemplation offer both comfort and transgression but des Esseintes ultimately only sinks deeper into depression and anxiety. Only religious belief could cure him from his melancholia and pessimism, but the mind of the overcultured decadent is far too analytical for a leap of faith.

Oswald Spengler, one of Hännikäinen's influences, envisioned the decline of the West as part of the recurring cycles of rise and decline that made up the great motion of history (in Spengler 1918–1922). Hännikäinen (2013, 97) points out empathetically in his reading of Marko Tapio that “[i]t is important to note that Tapio”, similar to Spengler, “conceives history as cyclical, not as a linear progression”.²³ In other words, the decay and destruction of civilizations time and again makes way for the rise of new ones, and for the pessimist Spengler, his contemporary culture was of course on a downward path. Hännikäinen's interpretation is one of the most striking examples of the dialogue that he puts forward between his antimodern canon and Tapio. The interpretation is strongly informed by Hännikäinen's reading of antimodern literature. It connects Tapio to the cyclical view of history as expressed not only by Spengler but also for instance Julius Evola, one of the favourite antimodern thinkers of today's far and especially extreme right.²⁴

The antimodern condition (cf. King 2016),²⁵ as it is expressed and developed in an idiosyncratic right-wing form by Hännikäinen, is a historically oriented ethical, political and literary position with its own canon of literature that stretches from the arch-conservative count Joseph de Maistre through Spengler, Evola and Ernst Jünger, among others, to Pentti Linkola and Michel Houellebecq. Hännikäinen often calls his right-wing brand of antimodernism ‘traditionalism’ (e.g., Hännikäinen 2016). By contrast, Peter King, an English social philosopher, has in his book *The Antimodern Condition: An Argument Against Progress* (2016) developed his own normative, ethical version of antimodern thought. King identifies with many antimoderns of the past such as de Maistre and René Guénon (1886–1951) but distinguishes himself from such far-right traditionalists as the esoteric fascist Evola or Alain de Benoist (b. 1943), leader of the currently functioning French ethno-nationalist think-tank GRECE (*Groupe ment de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne*). For King, the nationalist and racist thought typical of today's right-wing traditionalists, to whom Hännikäinen belongs, are modernist aberrations that should not be mixed with worthwhile antimodern ideas. While King is a conservative thinker and has been involved with Britain's Conservative Party, he says that because of his views on race and nationalism he has been accused of being a ‘cultural Marxist’ (King 2016, x). For him, antimodernism is true

²³ “On tärkeää huomata, että Tapion historiakäsitys on syklisesti, ei lineaarisesti etenevä.”

²⁴ Donald Trump's former strategist, Steve Bannon, is one of many examples of Evola's influence on today's far right (see Horowitz 2017).

²⁵ The title of Peter King's book *The Antimodern Condition* alludes to Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), even though King is not particularly polemical towards Lyotard or postmodernism.

conservatism and essentially the opposite of radicalism: it consists above all in accepting one's place in the world and embracing tradition as a source of wisdom. According to King, we should always be wary of change, and if sought, it should be corrective rather than transformative (King 2016, *passim*).

While King represents an idiosyncratic brand of political conservatism, antimodernism or the antimodern in literature has been studied extensively in the context of French literary history by Antoine Compagnon (2005). Drawing upon the study, Kevin Rulo (2016) has applied Compagnon's conception of the antimodern as a comparative framework in an analysis of the British modernist group whom Wyndham Lewis named 'the men of 1914', as well as T E Hulme (1883–1917), who is aesthetically and politically in line with the group. Hännikäinen has similarly discussed Hulme as an antimodern modernist in an essay (2005) in the cultural magazine *Kerberos* (Cerberos), which he edited until it ceased publication in 2014, and in the last essay of his debut collection *Taantumuksellisen uskontunnustus*. Peter Gay (2008) similarly describes the right-wing authors Knut Hamsun (1859–1952) and T S Eliot (1888–1965), among others, as antimodern modernists.

The concept of the antimodern has had a similar, though not necessarily completely identical content in many other studies, including a collection of articles on *fin de siècle* art across the western world, edited by Lynda Jessup (2001). T J Jackson Lears (1994) has studied the role of antimodern currents in the transformation of American culture during the decades around the turn of the 20th century, at the time of the Second Industrial Revolution which simultaneously swept central Europe. As Lears shows, antimodernism at the time involved "the recoil from an 'overcivilized' modern existence to more intense forms of physical or spiritual existence supposedly embodied in medieval or Oriental cultures" (Lears 1994, xv). A sense of inauthenticity and unreality accompanied the secularization and rationalization of life. However, the recoil from this experience was "not simply escapism" but "ambivalent, often coexisting with enthusiasm for material progress" (Lears 1994, xv). It could function as a kind of corrective therapy: "Rooted in reaction against secularizing tendencies, antimodernism helped ease accommodation to new and secular cultural modes" (Lears 1994, xv). Especially in the United States this meant for instance that "[c] raftsmanship became less a path to satisfying communal work than a therapy for tired businessmen" and that attempts to revive the martial ideal "ennobled not a quest for the Grail but a quest for foreign markets" (Lears 1994, xv). In Europe, where discontent with liberalism was more rampant, antimodernism gave rise to communitarian-type critiques of capitalism and especially far-right movements on a larger scale (Lears 1994, 6).

In historical right-wing ideologies, antimodernism has often been paradoxically combined with enthusiasm for technological and economic progress. This was the case in Nazi Germany, which despite the NSDAP's (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) misleading name was economically more capitalist than socialist, though it

operated a mixed economy.²⁶ The Nazis utilized the efficiency of capitalism and industrial corporations in the implementation of many of their goals, including war efforts and atrocities (see Rohkrämer 1999). As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had long before rather convincingly argued in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), a market economy ultimately tends to threaten tradition. The economy, technology and culture are inseparable; in the long run, it would probably turn out at least difficult, if not impossible, to have persisting traditional values, great social mobility and rampant technological and economic progress simultaneously. Today change is still the norm in the current phase of the “age of the bourgeoisie” in which “all that is solid melts into air” (cf. Berman 1983). In the view of Marx and Engels, the great upheavals of the capitalist era would pave the way for the birth of a new communist order, essentially a new type of human being free from the restraints of tradition. Such progress-oriented, radically transformative ideas are the polar opposite of core conservatism and what can be called antimodern pessimism, expressed in its most classic form by Joseph de Maistre and Edmund Burke (1729–1797), two early critics of the French Revolution (see Compagnon 2005). Nevertheless, antimodern ideas are often combined with revolutionary radicalism. The historical Nazis, today’s various fascist and Nazi movements and Pentti Linkola’s radical deep ecology are some cases in point. Linkola is a radical conservative for whom revolution means returning to a sustainable way of life.

In contrast to the Nazis or some of today’s populist right-wingers, Linkola rejects technology and industrial modernity, although as a fisherman he did appreciate at least one modern invention, namely Nokia rubber boots (Kylänpää 2017, 402). Linkola does not believe that man is capable of controlling the destructive potential of technology since he is unable to transcend the base instincts within him. Unsurprisingly, the luddite terrorist Theodore Kaczynski (b. 1942), also known as the Unabomber, felt an affinity to Linkola’s views and even approached Linkola in 2014, asking if Linkola thought the Finns had understood the inevitable destructiveness of modern technology. Linkola did not bother to respond to the letter bomber’s letter. (Kylänpää 2017, 433.) Kaczynski’s manifesto from 1995 was published as translated into Finnish by Timo Hännikäinen in 2005, at a time when Hännikäinen’s antimodernism was more ecological in orientation and Linkola was his ‘prophet’ (Hännikäinen 2021, 181).

In recent years, antimodern ideological currents have re-emerged particularly among right-wing nationalists, from Brazil and the United States to Europe and Russia, where they have played a role for instance in the thought of Alexander Dugin (b. 1962) and the Orthodox Patriarch Kirill (b. 1946). These national-conservative thinkers echo Russian imperialist and pan-Slavic thought of the 19th century, as expressed by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) among others who viewed the economic and social modernization of society from an essentially antimodern perspective. In such nationalist antimodernism, Russia has been seen as a beacon of conservative spiritual and cul-

²⁶ Early Strasserite socialist elements were rooted out of the party, particularly as part of Adolf Hitler’s great political purge, the Night of the Long Knives in 1934.

tural enlightenment, while the politically and socially more progressive West has been presented as morally decadent.

In my view, antimodernism is defined above all by its rejection of what is perceived as the abstract utopianism of modernity. Instead of believing in the power of the human mind and its theoretical constructions, as expressed for instance in communism or the liberal ideas of the American and French constitutions, antimodernism stresses that societies should evolve organically, based on history and experience. Postmodernism, too, involves scepticism towards modernity's insistence on progress, but antimodernism sets itself apart from the late 20th century movement in its orientation towards the past and tradition. Antimodernism is a tradition that has always gone hand in hand with modernity, beginning from the critics of the French Revolution and the First Industrial Revolution. It is an ideological and artistic current roughly four times older than postmodernism.

According to Lears (1994, xix), “[w]hat [literary] critics call modernism” and what he as a cultural historian calls antimodernism “share common roots in the *fin-desiècle* yearning for authentic experience – physical, emotional, or spiritual”. The *fin de siècle* and the early 20th century are the heyday of antimodernism in Western cultural history, particularly in central Europe, from French Decadent authors, Friedrich Nietzsche and the ‘conservative revolution’ of the Weimar republic (see Rosner 2012) to the Nazis. An air of cultural pessimism existed alongside ideas of progress, especially among artists, writers and the educated classes. This pessimism infiltrated Finnish cultural circles already at the turn of the 20th century through influences such as Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard and French writers such as Joris-Karl Huysmans and Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867). However, industrial modernity with its blessings and malaises, whether objective and/or experienced, hit Finland on a scale comparable to central and western Europe only much later, after the Second World War. Pentti Linkola and Marko Tapio were some of those who experienced the transformation during their youth.

Based on the religious studies scholar Arthur Versluis' (2006) analysis, I distinguish between three types of antimodernism that are often combined in different variations: cultural, spiritual and ecological antimodernism. Timo Hännikäinen is primarily a cultural antimodern, as were the many antimoderns of the early 20th century, including some elements in Nazi Germany's ruling party. Ecological issues often play a part in such right-wing antimodernism, but the main concern is with culture and its perceived decay, as it often is in current extreme right nationalism. For instance, the much-discussed documentary series *Suomineidot* (2022, Maidens of Finland) about young female nationalists, which was aired by the national broadcaster YLE, features as one of its main characters Jasmina Jalonen (b. 1995; in the documentary with the surname Ollikainen), a children's author who is a fan of Linkola and associates his ecological thinking with her own brand of green nationalism. The environment is important for her, but she is above all concerned with the vitality of Finnish culture, which has always been thought of as deeply rooted in nature. Jalonen is one of the four authors of the relatively recent essay collection *Linkolan perintö* [Linkola's Heritage] (2021),

which also features an essay by Hännikäinen. Jalonen participated in the 2023 parliamentary elections as a candidate of the Blue-and-Black Movement (*Sinimusta liike*), a neofascist and ethnonationalist party that involves antimodern elements especially in its strong ecological positions and critique of capitalism and globalism.

Pentti Linkola represents an extreme type of ecological antimodernism, which involves at its core an insistence on returning to a simpler way of life and reducing human populations globally and especially in Finland, even though Linkola himself fathered two daughters. Linkola views Finland as an ecological rogue state. His thought is always centred on the environment, but he is also a cultural conservative who for instance deemed homosexuality unnatural and re-joined the Lutheran church in his later days, even though he said he still did not have real faith but rather believed the church had a moral mission in society, a role to play in hampering the onslaught of cultural and economic modernization (Kylänpää 2017, 440–443).

The Finnish Soul, the Working Class and Modernity According to Linkola

It has been concluded – and it was concluded so in that seminar as well – that Linna gave the common man a sense of dignity. However, this deal did not turn out well. The ways of life, interests and ideals of the people did not change. They are the same as they have always been: bread and circuses, nothing else. Instead of adopting civilization, the people with its newly gained self-esteem dragged down the intelligentsia – with the brute overpowering force of the masses.

On todettu – ja todettiin tuossa seminaarissakin – että Linna antoi kansan syville riveille omanarvontunnon. Mutta kävi hullusti siinä kaupassa. Kansan elämäntavat ja intressit ja ihanteet eivät muuttuneet. Ne ovat samat kuin ajasta aikaan: leipää ja sirkushuveja, ei muuta. Sen sijaan että kansa olisi omaksunut sivistyksen, se itsetunnon saatuaan veti sivistyneistön alas – rahvaan ruhjovalla ylivoimalla. (Linkola 2004, 237)

The above excerpt is from one of Linkola's most discussed essays, titled 'Mietteitä ja muistoja vanhasta sivistyneistöstä – näkökulma vuosisadan aatehistoriaan'. The essay is based on a presentation Linkola gave at a seminar celebrating the birthday of the esteemed author Väinö Linna. Linna's novel trilogy *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* and his war novel *Tuntematon sotilas* are canonized interpretations of Finnish history and representations of admirable working-class characters. The novels have shaped the public consciousness as narratives of a developing national unity after the class warfare of the Finnish Civil War in 1918. Linkola considers Linna's interpretations of history flawed. According to him, they present an idealized view of the common man, while Linna's educated characters are often morally questionable, much more

so than educated people of the early twentieth century tended to be in real life. The modernization and democratic development of Finland – above all the growing political influence and well-being of the common man – has been accompanied by the decay of the intelligentsia: it too has sunk into the base materialism and egoism, the *panem et circenses* mentality typical of the masses. Equality and social mobility have meant the levelling of society.

The essay ‘Mietteitä ja muistoja vanhasta sivistyneistöstä’ represents a key text expressing Linkola’s attitude towards societal change in Finland as it endeavours to present a “perspective on the ideological history of a century”, as the subtitle goes. Linkola’s view of the intelligentsia of his childhood is idealistic and his image of the decadence of contemporary society somewhat exaggerated. Linkola claims the educated people of his youth were not interested in pursuing wealth or even talking about it; such a mentality was considered boorish. Intellectual pursuits flourished, charity was practised and the lower classes were treated with dignity. The essay is blatantly subjective and emotionally loaded. According to Linkola, “[w]e are living in the time of the deepest degradation in history, an era of the most foul simplistic materialism, the reign of money – that materialism from the mire of which man has in previous eras tried to rise out of and has even partly managed to” (Linkola 2004, 248).²⁷ The Finns of today are an upstart nation whose national character is defined by the lowest denominator. The ‘old intelligentsia’ represents a lost ideal of a balanced organization of society: a nation ruled by a civilized upper class.

In our current era of money and consumption, all is lost, as Linkola states at the end of his essay:

A cultivator of irony may find something positive in this atmosphere of the end of history: honesty. People are honestly greedy. Could there be more honest, apt denominations than the market force, the market economy? The market: a roundup of cheapness, miserable junk, biscuit-likes, whisks and balloons, a spectacle of hucksters, a jubilee of the riffraff. Civilization and the intelligentsia were what little beautiful and noble wretched mankind was able to squeeze out of itself. I miss it. At least I was around in time to see it. Today I do not feel at home anymore.

Iroonikko voi löytää jotakin myönteistä tässä historian lopun ilmapiirissä, rehellisyyden. Ollaan avoimesti ahneita. Voiko rehellisempiä, osuvampia nimityksiä löytää kuin markkinavoimat, markkinatalous? Markkinat: halpahintaisuuden tiivistelmä, surkeimman rihkaman, pumppernikkelien, huiskujen ja ilmapallojen, helppoheikkien speaktaakkeli, roskaväen riemujuhla. Sivistys ja sivistyneistö oli se vähä kaunis ja ylevä, mitä

²⁷ “Elämme historian syvimmän alennustilan aikaa, törkeän pelkistetyn materialismin, rahan valtakautta – sen materialismin, jonka liejusta ihminen aikaisempina aikakausina on yrittänyt ponnistella ylös, ja osaksi onnistunutkin.”

raadollinen ihmiskunta pystyi itsestään puserutamaan. Minulla on sitä ikävä. Ehdinpähän sen nähdä. Enää en viihdy. (Linkola 2004, 249)

The end of history, a Hegelian concept known from Francis Fukuyama's study *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), denotes the victory of liberal democracy and capitalism over all ideological opposition. In addition to Linkola's essay, the concept appears in the preface of the collection *Voisiko elämä voittaa?* (2004, 5). For Linkola, the words carry a very literal meaning in addition to the one familiar from Fukuyama: the victory of democracy and neo-liberal capitalism means the end of hope for the planet and mankind.

Throughout his oeuvre, Linkola's ideal image of the Finnish commoner is a peasant, a small-time farmer who lives in a balanced relationship with the natural environment, performs physical labour and rests at the end of the day, perhaps reading a work of fiction. Characters resembling this ideal image – apart from the habit of reading, usually – have been depicted in the Finnish literary tradition of *kansankuvaus* ('depiction of ordinary people') beginning from the 19th century, most notably from Aleksis Kivi's (1834–1872) novel *Seitsemän veljestä* (1870, transl. *Seven Brothers* 1929). The characters are typically far from perfect people and can rather be described as antiheroes. The tradition is also characterized, among other things, by a democratic tendency that runs contrary to Linkola's elitism.²⁸ However, the essential idea in comparison to Linkola's worldview is that the characters and settings are traditionally agrarian. The full-blown corruption of Linkola's ideal character is realized in the socialist industrial worker, a materialist and greedy creature.

According to Linkola, any system that promotes material or social progress should be opposed, and socialism is an extreme instance of the malaise of modernity. However, socialism as it was actually implemented seemed to Linkola the better of the two major competing systems of the 20th century; at least this is the impression gained from some of his writings that are often mutually and even internally contradictory. Socialism's ethos of progress was antithetical to Linkola's ecological agenda and his cultural conservatism, but the '*Realsozialismus*' that was practised in various places across the globe produced less material welfare than Capitalism; thus, as Linkola seemed to believe, it was less destructive for the environment (Linkola 1989, 57). Nevertheless, since his earliest writings Linkola resented the collectivism inherent in socialism, as seen for instance in the essay 'Runo-Suomi vai hyvinvointivaltio' [PoetryFinland or Welfare State] (1960, in Linkola 1971). Socialism represents for Linkola an ideological 'sublimation' of the banal values, interests and affects of the working class. It grows out of jealousy and resentment, the affects congregating in the ugly urban hives of industrial towns, yet it presents itself as utopian.

For Linkola, remnants of an ideal agrarian way of life can still be seen on the outskirts of civilization. In one of his essays, titled 'Karjala' [Karelia] (1993, in Linkola

²⁸ A classic description of the six main traits of the *kansankuvaus* tradition is given by Kai Laitinen (1997, 310–311).

2004), Linkola's speaker ventures to Karelia, continuing the long tradition of romanticizing the eastern regions of the country and the Fenno-Ugric lands that have lain beyond the border with Russia. In 19th and early 20th century national Romanticism, Karelia was associated with folklore and the birth of the national epic, the *Kalevala* (1835, second, complete edition 1849). The region was idealized to the extent that some who visited it were sorely disappointed with their contemporary reality. In contrast to his often pessimistic themes, Linkola stresses in the essay that the stories of Karelia that he has heard do not do justice to the land and its people. He sees the people of 1990s Karelia as natural downshifters who settle for what they have. They have remained untainted by the hectic spirit of modernity, surrounded by pristine nature. These wonderful people represent an ideal past, not as folklore singers but as authentic human beings. Sadly, nearly all the inhabitants of Linkola's contemporary Finland have lost their way, abandoned their ideal better self.

Linkola suffered from very intimate solastalgia as expressed in many of his essays, such as 'Itke rakastettu maa' [Weep, oh Beloved Land] (1983, in Linkola 1989), which depicts the damage done to a beautiful countryside landscape by the lumber industry and pursuit of material progress.²⁹ Solastalgia can be characterized as 'homesickness' one experiences in familiar surroundings due to environmental change.³⁰ In the essay 'Vihreä valhe' (1993, in Linkola 2004, transl. *The Green Lie*), Linkola laments how he has suffered through "the whole post-war history of the breaking down of the countryside, the mother landscape of Finland, the forests, the crushing and smearing of the motherly face of the fatherland" (Linkola 2004, 26).³¹

Based on his own emotional turmoil, Linkola often generalises about other people's relationship to nature. Many of his essays insist that the Finns know instinctively, as a bodily experience rather than in their fully conscious minds, that they are unwell. For instance in the essay 'Minkä tähden?' [For What?] (1983, in Linkola 1989) Linkola thinks everyone "feels deep down that the basic needs of man are working with one's entire body and soul, need, striving and the accomplishments of one's own hands, that without these, and without the silence of rest and the darkness of the night, life will crumble" (Linkola 1989, 43).³² According to the Linkola of the Independence Day of 1983, the contemporary Finn was "more distressed, more sad and more unwell than ever before in history" (Linkola 1989, 58).³³

²⁹ Linkola's solastalgia has been remarked upon by Mikko Kallionsivu (2021) in an essay which is one of the many texts that have assessed Linkola's legacy in the years since his death.

³⁰ The concept has been used referring especially to climate change.

³¹ "Maaseudun, Suomen emomaiseman, metsien luhistumisen, isänmaan äidinkasvojen rutistumisen ja töhriintymisen koko sotienjälkeisen historian olen läpikäynyt."

³² "Kyllä he pohjimmiltaan tuntevat, että ihmisen perustarpeita ovat työnteke koko ruumiilla ja sielulla, puute, ponnistelu ja omien käten aikaansaannokset, että ilman niitä, ja ilman levon hiljaisuutta ja yön pimeyttä, elämä luhistuu."

³³ "[A]hdistuneempi, surullisempi ja huonovointisempi kuin koskaan historiassa."

Linkola presents himself as an interpreter of the nation's sentiments. His solastalgia can be seen as a form of Arctic hysteria: an affliction caused by the decay of the familiar northern environment and landscape, shared, according to him, in the affective experience of the entire nation. For Linkola, the psychic and biological makeup of the Finns is deeply rooted in the natural environment, accustomed to its harsh conditions throughout the centuries. The environment binds people together as a natural tribe. Thus, anyone from, say, Brazil, is for Linkola a foreign soul, as he writes in his 1966 essay 'Ihmisten veljeydestä' [On the Brotherhood of Men] (in Linkola 2015).

Despite its tribalist attitude typical of Linkola's whole oeuvre, the essay 'Ihmisten veljeydestä' belongs to a phase in Linkola's career that was marked by a relatively 'soft' and even semi-optimistic disposition. Linkola's first book, the pacifist pamphlet *Isänmaan ja ihmisen puolesta – mutta ei ketään vastaan* [For the Fatherland and Humanity – But Against Nobody] (1960) seems by all accounts particularly 'progressive'.³⁴ The essay 'Runo-Suomi vai hyvinvointivaltio' (in Linkola 1971) from the same year expresses some hope for change in our way of life. The early Linkola thinks we can perhaps rid ourselves of the notion of never-ending material progress and competition that capitalism has instilled in us. Linkola's growing pessimism is evident in his second collection of essays, *Toisinajattelijan päiväkirjasta* [From the Diary of a Dissident] (1979).

Linkola's radicalism is not only ecological but also involves a sense of the banality and decay of modern culture. His stance in the essay 'Mietteitä ja muistoja vanhasta sivistyneistöstä' is strikingly anti-democratic and right-wing. Linkola interprets the Finnish civil war as born out of the base affects of the working class:

On both sides the intensity of participation varied from case to case. Even some who opposed violence got dragged into the Reds, pressured by those around them. Still, the cause of the revolt is familiar to everyone, the same as that of all red revolutions: a raging resentment and jealousy towards those who are economically and above all mentally superior. And in practice the revolt meant brawling, looting and murders. For the intelligentsia, choosing sides was easy. After all, it was also a confrontation between civilization and barbarism.

Molemmilla puolilla osallistumisen intensiteetti oli tapauskohtaista. Punikkeihinkin joutui jopa väkivallan vastustajia vedetyiksi mukaan ympäristön painostuksesta. Kapinan syy on silti kaikille tuttu, sama kuin jokaisen punaisen vallankumouksen: raivokas kauna ja kateus taloudellisesti ja ennen kaikkea henkisesti ylempänä olevia kohtaan. Ja sen käytännöksi tuli räyhääminen, ryöstäminen ja murhaaminen. Sivistyneistölle puolenvalinta oli selviö. Olihan kysymyksessä myös kulttuurin ja barbarian yhteenotto. (Linkola 2004, 241)

³⁴ The pamphlet is the product of discussions among members of a group of young intellectuals, put into concise written form by Linkola.

The Reds lost, and Linkola considers the 1930s and the time of the Second World War as the golden age of the values of the ‘old intelligentsia’. After that “the downfall began: industrialization, the welfare of the masses and their aggressive sense of self-worth. The Reds finally got what they had wanted” (Linkola 2004, 245)³⁵. According to Linkola, today there are only relics left of the ‘old intelligentsia’. In the year 2000, the decay of true civilization can be seen everywhere. The upstart masses of the postindustrial north dance around a new golden calf, a trinket store called Nokia, which sells cell phones instead of useful Nokia rubber boots.

Hännikäinen’s *Hysterian maa* and Antimodern Thought

Linkola sees his contemporary society as corrupt and banal. The unreliable narrator of Marko Tapio’s *Arktinen Hysteria* novels is just as pessimistic as Linkola, Tapio’s contemporary. Hännikäinen’s interpretations of the novels in his essayistic study *Hysterian maa* are premised on the view that the character narrator’s thoughts and sentiments reflect those of Tapio. At the same time, the interpretations are informed by Hännikäinen’s reading history and literary and ideological interests. *Hysterian maa* is primarily a study of Tapio’s novels, but as an essayistic work it also contains more general reflections upon themes that Hännikäinen has also addressed in his more personal texts, particularly the dark aspects of human nature and Finnishness.

According to Hännikäinen’s apt description of the concrete subject matter of the novels, “[*Arktinen*] *Hysteria* depicts through its character gallery the transition of this strange Northern people from an agrarian into a modern society during the first half of the 20th century” (*HM*, 23).³⁶ The novels tell the story of the Björkharry family and the entire Finnish nation from the 1890s to the 1960s, the tale of a young country becoming independent and struggling with internal conflicts and against external enemies. The Björkharry family is an upstart family, reflecting the development of Finland as an industrializing nation. The first-person narrator of the novels describes the Finns as “a people bearing the mark of the most upstartly culture in the world” (Tapio 1967, 136).³⁷ The narrator Harri Björkharry works as a manager at the construction site of a hydro-electric plant, in a position that is emblematic of progress. He has evolved into a complex man of culture who likes to spend his time reading and listening to symphonies, while his father Vikki Björkharry is closer to the primitive common man, though he is also a capitalist upstart, a banker, and becomes a cabinet minister. Like his father, grandfather and the entire Finnish nation, the narrator Harri Björkharry is affected by

³⁵ “Mutta sitten alkoi luhistuminen: teollistuminen, massojen hyvinvointi ja hyökkäävä omanarvontunto. Punikit saivat lopulta mitä olivat halunneet.”

³⁶ “Hysteria kuvaa henkilögalleriansa avulla tämän oudon Pohjolan kansan siirtymistä agraarisesta moderniin yhteiskuntaan 1900-luvun ensimmäisen puoliskon aikana.”

³⁷ “[M]aailman nousukasmaisimman kulttuurin leimaa kantavan kansan.”

the primitive ‘syndrome’ of Arctic hysteria, as Pirjo Lyytikäinen (2020, 110, 112) has pointed out, emphasizing the fact that the unstable narrator’s words do not necessarily reflect the views of the (implied) author. At the same time, Björkharry is detached from his roots, the humble origins of his family, and alienated from life as action and vitality. Decadent overculture and primitivism become intertwined in the character, in this respect even somewhat resembling the extremely overrefined protagonist of J-K Huysmans’ *À rebours* (1884). Because of his shifting mental states and affectively loaded views, Björkharry is an unreliable narrator, although Hännikäinen ignores this fact, arguing for an interpretation of the works as deeply personal, rooted in Tapio’s own contradictions (*HM*, 16–23).

According to Hännikäinen,

The essential theme of the novel series³⁸ [*Arktinen hysteria*] is Finnishness: a bluff, melancholic, passive and withdrawn national character, which from time to time unexpectedly bursts into extreme mental states and deeds. *Hysteria* is a deep examination of the dark side of Finnishness but not really a morality play or a sick report. Recognizing the dark sides in a culture does not mean abandoning it or putting it to shame.

Romaanisarjan varsinainen aihe on suomalaisuus: jäyhä, alakuloinen, passiivinen ja sulkeutunut kansanluonne, joka välillä leimahtaa äkkiarvaamatta äärimmäisiin mielentiloihin ja tekoihin. *Hysteria* on suomalaisuuden pimeän puolen syväluotaus, muttei varsinaisesti moraliteetti tai sairaskertomus. Pimeiden puolten tunnustaminen kulttuurissa ei tarkoita sen hylkäämistä tai häpäisemistä. (*HM*, 22)

Hännikäinen reads Tapio’s novels essentially as an exploration of the Finnish psyche. According to him, Tapio presents Arctic hysteria as something that has always resided within the minds and bodies of the Finns (*HM*, 22–23). Unlike Linkola’s *solastalgia*, it is not caused by the modernization process that Tapio’s novels depict, the rapid transition from an agrarian into an industrial society, though it may react to the changing circumstances. Instead, Arctic hysteria is a natural phenomenon. In Hännikäinen’s view,

Tapio suggests that the thoroughly Finnish habit of hovering between subordination and lack of restraint is perfectly natural given the environmental circumstances that the Finns have had to deal with since the stone age. Arctic hysteria is a mentality typical of northern peoples in general and the Finns in particular. It is a geographic-cultural phenomenon and almost immune to the passage of time.

³⁸ Tapio originally planned to write a four-part novel series but managed to complete only two parts.

Tapio antaa ymmärtää, että perisuomalainen häilyminen alistuneisuuden ja hillittömyyden välillä on täysin luonnollista kun otetaan huomioon ne luonnonolot, joiden kanssa suomalaisten on pitänyt pärjätä kivikaudesta saakka. Arktinen hysteria on pohjoisille kansoille yleensä ja suomalaisille erityisesti leimallista mentaliteettia. Se on maantieteelliskulttuurinen ja ajan kululle lähes immuuni ilmiö. (*HM*, 22)

In Hännikäinen's interpretation of Tapio, the Finnish national character and mentality is for an important part defined by Arctic hysteria, as the narrator seems to suggest. The 'bipolar' nature of the Finns represents danger and chaos, but it can also be unleashed as vitality and strength; thus, it has served a purpose in the history of the nation, particularly in times of war, even though it has also fuelled the fratricidal madness of the Civil War. Arctic hysteria affects every Finn: man and woman, worker and banker, White and Red.

The geographic far north and the actual Arctic regions play no role in Tapio's *Arktinen hysteria* novels. The main story is set in Saarijärvi in central Finland, a town that bears a symbolic meaning as the setting of the national poet J L Runeberg's (1804– 1877) poem 'Bonden Paavo' [Paavo of Säärijärvi] from the year 1830, which depicts an ideal peasant character: a hard-working, humble and god-fearing man who expresses fortitude in the face of setbacks – the antithesis of most of the workers in Tapio's novels. Despite the milieu set in central Finland, the narrator of the *Arktinen hysteria* novels interprets the Finnish national character as an essentially northern entity, as if the Arctic stretched across the entire country.

Tapio's narrator Harri Björkharry, an engineer and capitalist, expresses negative views of the working-class Finns, in some ways resembling the views of Linkola. According to Hännikäinen's (2013, 26) description, the writer Tapio – whose ideas the narrator seems to express, in Hännikäinen's view – can in terms of his opinions regarding the commoners be considered 'right-wing' – in quotation marks – while Väinö Linna is 'left-wing'. The workers of Björkharry's construction site act against their own best interests and appear to the narrator as creatures driven by bitterness, resentment and other base emotions and instincts. Their existence revolves around drinking, violence and other erratic behaviour stemming from their primitive nature and its tenuous relationship with external circumstances. Björkharry's workers sabotage his attempts to bring modernization and material progress to them, launching a strike just as the dam of the powerplant is about to burst, destroying everyone's work.

Despite Björkharry's negative views of the masses and the class conflicts depicted in Tapio's novels, Hännikäinen considers *Arktinen hysteria* to be more philosophical than political in orientation (*HM*, 43). In other words, Hännikäinen interprets Tapio as more interested in human nature and morality than the transient affairs of politics. The novels express "a sentiment of life" that is "a combination of pessimism and frenzy" (*HM*,

8)³⁹ and “the hard to define, almost nihilistic despair that emanates from Tapio’s text prevents one from reducing *Hysteria* to any kind of political statement” (*HM*, 26).⁴⁰ As argued in Chapter II in this book, the narrator is an ‘abject hero’ type of character, reminiscent of the dark personalities of Russian and French existentialism. He has lost all hope in the divine and in humanity. He can also be interpreted as antimodern, despite his efforts to bring technological modernization to the people. Hännikäinen interprets this to be the stance of the (implied) author: “The novel expresses scepticism towards modernization and a feeling that the forces unleashed by it will demand a bitter sacrifice as always when a new order is born” (*HM*, 55)⁴¹. Economic and social modernization are inseparable, and Björkharry also expresses scepticism towards technology. According to my interpretation, the discrepancy between his aspirations as an engineer and his antimodern sentiments is part of his thoroughgoing ambivalence and self-contradictory nature.

According to Hännikäinen, Tapio’s antimodernism involves not only scepticism towards technological, economic and social progress but also a pessimistic view of humanity. Man as a species is not the ‘homo sapiens’ conceived as an a-historical abstraction by the Enlightenment. The Arctic hysteria of the Finns is a natural phenomenon just like violence and oppression are constants of human history, realities that only a utopian modernist mind would consider eradicable. In Hännikäinen’s view,

The basic philosophical disposition of *Hysteria* is in this sense conservative – in the philosophical sense of the word rather than the political. Tapio does not believe in peaceful and painless progress: real change always involves violence and the painful parting with the old. And we cannot know for certain whether any benefit created by change can replace that which we lose. Life itself consists of too many unpredictable and uncontrollable elements for change to be directed rationally.

Hysterian maailmankatsomuksellinen perusvire on tässä mielessä konservatiivinen – pikemminkin sanan filosofisessa kuin poliittisessä merkityksessä. Tapio ei usko kehityksen rauhanomaisuuteen ja kivuttomuuteen: aitoon muutokseen sisältyy aina väkivaltaa ja tuskallista vanhasta luopumista. Emmekä voi varmuudella tietää, voiko mikään muutoksen tuoma etu korvata sitä minkä menetämme. Itse elämässä on liikaa ennakkoimattomia ja hallitsemattomia elementtejä, jotta muutoksia voitaisiin rationaalisesti ohjata. (*HM*, 55)

³⁹ “Vaikka kerronnan intensiteetti vaihteli suurestikin alun jälkeen, sen välittämä elämäntunne, yhdistelmä pessimismia ja kiihkeyttä, pysyi samana.”

⁴⁰ “Mutta Tapion tekstistä huokuva vaikeasti määriteltävä, lähes nihilistinen epätoivo estää *Hysterian* supistamisen minkäänlaiseksi poliittiseksi puheenvuoroksi.”

⁴¹ “Romaanista tihkuu epäluulo modernisaatiota kohtaan ja tunne, että sen irralleen päästämät voimat vaativat katkeran uhrin kuten aina uuden järjestyksen syntyessä.”

Conservative in this sense is synonymous with antimodernism's scepticism towards progress. For the antimodern mindset, the realities of human nature and the teachings of history cannot be ignored. The French Revolution, a central birth event of modernity, and the Finnish 'red rebellion' and Civil War are instances in which aspirations for sudden radical change have brought about violence on a massive scale.

One of the chapters in Hännikäinen's book is titled 'Puhdistava sota' [Cleansing War]. According to Hännikäinen's interpretation, Tapio's novels present war as a natural phenomenon, just like Arctic hysteria is natural among the northern peoples. War is ugly business, yet in a bizarre way it may have a 'cleansing' effect, albeit only a temporary one, as part of the cycles of rise and decline that make up the cyclical motion of history (*HM*, 97). War shows individuals and human nature as they really are, in their bare wretchedness (*HM*, 78), yet a man of the working class, Vihtori Kautto, expresses the best potential of the Finnish national character as a soldier (*HM*, 93–94). Kautto narrates the history of the Second World War in the second part of the *Arktinen hysteria* series, titled *Sano todella rakastatko minua* [Say If You Really Love Me or Not] (1968). He is an individualistic worker who sides with Björkharry in the conflict against his fellow workmen at the construction site. Kautto has earlier accompanied the narrator's father Vikki Björkharry in the Winter War and the Continuation War. Resembling the character Antti Rokka in Väinö Linna's *Tuntematon sotilas*, Kautto does not conform to the strict discipline of the military, displaying according to Hännikäinen's description a type of antimodern mentality: "Once again it is a matter of the straightforward and independent character not conforming to the complex organizations of modern times" (*HM*, 94).⁴²

Similar to Hännikäinen's interpretation of Tapio's 'cleansing war', right-wing antimodernism often sees war as an antidote to the banal materialistic spirit of modern society, even if war is not actively sought. In times of war, manly heroism and honour can perhaps once again mean something. War unleashes primitive energies, and in the heat of war one can perhaps feel truly alive. Fuelled by notions like national pride and honour, war brings an end to 'the end of history', the reign of material welfare. This line of thought is expressed in a particularly interesting way by one of Hännikäinen's favourite author's, George Orwell (1903–1950). Hännikäinen has translated a selection of Orwell's essays from the 1940s with the title *Sinä ja atomipommi* [You and the Atom Bomb] (2021). The selection includes Orwell's review of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* from 1940. In the essay, Orwell argues that Hitler's appeal for the Germans involves the realization that people ultimately value heroism, honour, national pride and military parades more than the hedonistic pursuit of comfort and pleasure that both socialism and capitalism have to offer. Even though Orwell described himself as a democratic socialist, Hännikäinen appreciates him as a thinker and author, partic-

⁴² "Jälleen on kyse suoran ja itsenäisen luonteen sopeutumattomuudesta modernin maailman mutkikkaisiin organisaatioihin."

ularly as an essayist. The essay about Hitler can be seen as one display of Orwell's ability to grasp the 'manly' spirit.

Hännikäinen's approach to the problem of 'the end of history' is different from Linkola's, though there are similarities. Resembling Orwell's interpretation of the appeal of Hitlerian chauvinist militarism, the fate of masculinity is a central issue for Hännikäinen. In his book *Kunnia: esseitä maskuliinisuudesta* [Honour: Essays on Masculinity] (2015) Hännikäinen writes that

If the height of modernity is "the end of history" when everyone is a docile consumer who accepts his lot, forming male groups means beginning history again. The brotherhood is the basic unit of history, out of which all revolutions, voyages of discovery, religions and all paradigm changes in general have sprung.

Jos moderniuden huipentuma on "historian loppu", jossa kaikki ovat säyseitä ja osaansa tyytyviä kuluttajia, miesryhmien muodostaminen tarkoittaa historian aloittamista uudelleen. Veljeskunta on historian perusyksikkö, josta ovat kummunneet vallankumoukset, löytöretket, uusien uskontojen synnyt, ylipäättään kaikki paradigmanvaihdot. (Hännikäinen 2015, 115)

For Hännikäinen, honour means being viewed as strong, brave and capable within the homosocial context of what he calls an "honour group" (Hännikäinen 2015, 39).⁴³ Hännikäinen's ideal brotherhood is a community that is "inevitably antimodern" (Hännikäinen 2015, 115).⁴⁴ It rejects modern notions of equality, the hedonistic pursuit of comfort and pleasure, and consumer culture in which masculinity is reduced to mere appearance. There is a fantasizing streak to Hännikäinen's idolization of 'authentic' manliness. According to his narrative, by taming nature and bringing about peace and prosperity, modern men have created a world in which their special tendencies and abilities are no longer essential, a world for women. However, strong and brave men may still be needed if the "post-industrial shopping paradise" (Hännikäinen 2015, 54)⁴⁵ crumbles. Some kind of apocalypse could perhaps bring down the consumer culture that sees itself as "the end of history". According to Hännikäinen, Marko Tapio too saw the "idea of the end of spiritual and moral struggle" as "a nightmare" (*HM*, 46)⁴⁶ – essentially a nightmarish "end of history" as it was conceived by Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathustra's* (1883–1885) dystopian figure of "the Last Man". At the end of history, the Nietzschean ideal of continuous self-transcendence – Tapio's ideal according

⁴³ "[K]unniaryhmä".

⁴⁴ "[V]äistämättä antimoderni".

⁴⁵ "[J]älkiteollinen ostosparatiisi".

⁴⁶ Hännikäinen refers to Tapio's widow Tuulikki Valkonen (2003): "Valkonen kirjoittaa, että ajatus henkisen ja moraalisen kilvoittelun pysähtymisestä oli Tapiolle painajainen, jonka estämiseen tarvittiin jyrkkiäkin hierarkioita."

to Hännikäinen – becomes obsolete. In Hännikäinen’s view, Tapio’s ideal character is “a Nietzschean man of will who rises above the given circumstances” (*HM*, 49).⁴⁷

Hännikäinen’s interpretations of Tapio resonate with antimodern thought of the *fin de siècle* and the early 20th century, the heyday of antimodernism in Europe. Antimodernism at the time often turned towards mysticism, spirituality and/or the veneration of the past, seeking an existence with deeper meaning and feeling (see Lears 1994). The glorification of war was evident at the onset of the First World War, as millions of people in different European countries displayed their national pride. The ideology of technologically advanced Nazi Germany involved a dose of agrarian romanticism. This is an important aspect of Nazism’s appeal for Linkola, with whom Hännikäinen shares much in common. The allure is to a considerable degree aesthetic and affective: Linkola admires the image of healthy and beautiful Aryans hiking in the mountains, dressed in national costumes (see Hillebrand 2015). Interestingly, Hännikäinen has discussed the aesthetics of Nazism from a thoroughly different, even opposite perspective in his essay ‘Kolmas valtakunta ja Dorian Gray’ [The Third Reich and Dorian Gray] (in Hännikäinen 2011). He compares Nazism to the decadent aestheticism of the *fin de siècle*, which in its own way rebelled against modern rationality. The same essay describes Linkola as “above all a great aesthete who feels an almost physical pain when he encounters something ugly” (Hännikäinen 2011, 196).⁴⁸

For the antimodern mindset, mysticism, spirituality, agrarian romanticism, aestheticism and the glorification of war can offer some alternatives to the banality of modern life. Arctic hysteria, too, can be interpreted as a source of transgressive energy, involving a sense of authenticity and an intensity of experience lacking from the life of the docile consumer at ‘the end of history’. It can represent a counterforce of overcivilization and decadence, as primitivism in general often does (cf. Rossi 2020). It definitely bears these meanings for Hännikäinen, who has been fascinated by extreme characters like the artist Kalervo Palsa (1947–1987), theatre director and author Jouko Turkka (1942–2016) and the alcohol-ridden Marko Tapio, men who can all be characterized as prime examples of Arctic hysteria in action. In his essay collection *Ihmisen viheläisyydestä* [On the Wretchedness of Man] (2011) Hännikäinen writes about “[a]n unofficial, dark Finnishness expressed in such mythical and real characters as Kullervo, Turmiolan Tommi, Isontalon Antti, Paavo Ruotsalainen and Kalervo Palsa” (Hännikäinen 2011, 98).⁴⁹ The characters represent rebellion (Kullervo), the dangers of alcohol abuse (Turmiolan Tommi), violent and criminal behaviour (Isontalon Antti), religious fanaticism (Paavo Ruotsalainen) and transgression and carnivalization in art (Kalervo Palsa) – a true gallery of Arctic hysteria. Even Hännikäinen’s own behaviour in the

⁴⁷ “Tapion ihanne oli annettujen olosuhteiden yläpuolelle nouseva nietzscheläinen tahtoihminen.”

⁴⁸ “Linkolahan on ennen muuta suuri esteetti, joka tuntee lähes fyysistä tuskaa kohdatessaan jotakin rumaa.”

⁴⁹ “Epävirallinen, pimeä suomalaisuus elää sellaisissa myyttisissä ja todellisissa hahmoissa kuin Kullervo, Turmiolan Tommi, Isontalon Antti, Paavo Ruotsalainen ja Kalervo Palsa.”

social media, in which moral transgression and carnivalesque attitude are entwined, can be interpreted as expression of Arctic hysteria.

Whether Hännikäinen's interpretations of Tapio are considered correct or not, or perhaps as plausible interpretations among others, depends on the interpretation of the relationship between the narrator and the (implied) author. In my view, the unreliability of the narrator should be considered, in which case Hännikäinen's interpretation of the worldview and message of the novels becomes questionable. If we consider Björkharry unreliable, he is reduced to being only a character instead of the spokesman of Tapio's sentiments. Moreover, it is clear that Hännikäinen's interpretations are informed by his antimodernism which is discernible in his other texts. In other words, Hännikäinen arrives at his conclusions through a reading that is both biographical and at the same time reflective of his own worldview and ideological and literary interests, which include a fascination with the dark side of Finnishness.

Conclusion

I have analysed Linkola and Hännikäinen's *Hysterian maa* from an essentially intertextual point of view, emphasizing the way Hännikäinen's interpretations of Marko Tapio resonate with his antimodern canon which includes Linkola. I have outlined an intertextual continuum of antimodern thought that begins from the time of the French Revolution. In Linkola's case, I have focused on his interpretation of societal change in Finland as expressed particularly in the essay 'Mietteitä ja muistoja vanhasta sivistysteistöstä'. In the essay, Linkola believes all areas of Finnish society have sunk to the level of the lowest denominator, the pursuit of material welfare that is the soul of the working class. Even though the working class only seems to be fulfilling its true nature, Linkola paradoxically believes that the upstart Finns with their cars, heating systems, microwave ovens and summer cottages are not truly happy. They have lost their better self.

Linkola's negative views regarding the working class spring from his nostalgia towards his privileged childhood and from contempt towards industrial modernity. He shares with Hännikäinen a pessimistic view of human nature and the development of modern mass society. The idea of 'the end of history' is a concern for both authors. In Linkola's last essay collection *Voisiko elämä voittaa?*, the dystopian vision is seen from the perspective of both ecological and cultural antimodernism. Late modern society involves the impoverishment of the biosphere as well as Finnish culture and human life in general.

For Timo Hännikäinen, the Arctic hysteria depicted in Marko Tapio's novels represents primitive affects that for their part define the Finnish national character. Embracing Arctic hysteria as part of oneself is for Hännikäinen just as essential an ingredient of national pride as pride in *sisu*, a concept that today evokes an association with the far-right organization *Suomen Sisu*, vice-chaired by Hännikäinen. According to

Hännikäinen, a sense of danger and primal life force is characteristic of Finnishness. Arctic hysteria in this sense is also important for Hännikäinen's and Linkola's essayistic style, their antimodern *vitupération*, as well as their public provocations and transgressions, which involve a dose of carnivalesque attitude, particularly in Hännikäinen's case. Moreover, for the antimodern mindset, Arctic hysteria can represent transcending the banal, docile and emasculated life of the post-industrial consumer.

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