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464 minutes for 100 kroner. The myth of the myth of 1864

There is no way to briefly write about what happened in the Kingdom of Denmark in April 1864 and what it had resulted in over the following century and a half. It would require me to write a lengthy essay or even an entire book. Let me just explain, that Denmark has suffered an abysmal defeat against the Austro-Prussian coalition and as a result surrendered the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein to the victors. Earlier it has also lost Norway in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. The battered kingdom, definitively humiliated by Otto von Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, has become a *småstat*, a small state, which it remains to this day in European politics, with all the consequences for its politics, economy, and most importantly, its mentality¹. For the Danish history year 1864 is a civilizational watershed, the beginning of modern Denmark. The traumatic war experience was quickly re-forged into a blueprint of the country's development. The round anniversary of the defeat has over all positive undertones: it is the 150 anniversary of the birth of "a brave little nation", whose achievements and quality of life is admired by outsiders². Apart from the abundance of scholarly and popular publications, the anniversary of the defeat in the Battle of Dybbøl has also brought the TV audiences *1864*, a television series filmed on a grand scale. There was no need for a more inventive title, as the date carries very clear associations in Denmark

In this article I will look at the series not only as an example of a made-for-television piece of art, but I will also stress the cultural message about the national identity it sends out to the viewers. I will also argue that in spite of the expectations originally associated with it, the anniversary television series has had no influence on the Danish identity, nor did it bring about a new national debate over the importance of year 1864. It has dissolved in the conventional discourse and was assimilated by the existing cultural system. It was an event that was no event at all.

If we watch *1864* unprejudiced by the reviews in Danish media and aware of the mechanisms behind popular culture, we will easily notice that there is nothing surprising this intended blockbuster or in the circumstances in which it was filmed. I have consciously used the "blockbuster" label being fully aware of the scale: Denmark is a small country with a small population (for comparison: its population of 5.5 million is only half of the population of the German state of Baden-Württemberg); although Danish cinematic industry is very dynamic, well regarded abroad, and increasingly cosmopolitan (one example to mention is the participation of Det Danske Filminstitut in producing and financing *Ida*, the Academy Award-winning film by Paweł Pawlikowski), it cannot compare to the clout of Hollywood producers.

1864 is predictable and I will attempt to prove it in the four points listed below.

1. From the beginning it was known that the producers of *1864* would easily receive state funding. Regardless of its cultural criticism by the intellectuals, who claim that in the recent years the Danish society has been engulfed by the culture of oblivion, or even that the Danish suffer from "dementia", as did Michael Böss in the title of his book³, which results in average Dane's meagre grasp of his country's history, it is impossible to completely erase the memory of the 150th anniversary of the Dybbøl defeat. Although the Danish television

¹ *Læren af 1864. Krig, politik og stat i Danmark i 150 år*, red. Lars Bangert Struwe, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, Odense 2014. Johan Peter Noack, *Da Danmark blev Danmark. Fortællinger af forhistorien til 1864*, Gyldendal, København 2014.

² Hellen Russell, *Mit år som dansker. På jagt efter hemmeligheden bag verdens lykkeligste nation*, Turbine, Aarhus 2015. Richard Jenkins, *At være dansk. Identitet i hverdagslivet*, Museum Tusulanum Press, København 2014.

³ Michael Böss, *Det demente samfund. Historieløshed i nutidskulturen*, Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag, København 2014.

decided not to broadcast the official celebrations of the anniversary, instead offering the audience a broadcast of the World Half Marathon⁴, the first episode of the series (broadcast on 12 December 2014) was watched by 1,690,000 viewers, so 70% of all viewers. This record-breaking ratings did not last until the end of the show's run: the fourth episode was watched by half a million less viewers⁵. It was also easily foreseeable that spending the hefty sum of 173 million kroner in times of an economic crisis will leave the Danes disgruntled: the cost of the filming it could have been used to cover more rational needs of a society living in a welfare state. I bought a DVD set with all the eight episodes in a supermarket for 99.99 kroner. In Denmark it is quite a radically reduced price for a *nyhed*, a recent release (*9 April* starring Pilou Asbæk cost 249 kroner). No numerological tricks employed by the filmmakers could change this: it can be assumed that it was their conscious decision to make sure the total run of all episodes is exactly 464 minutes.

2. The first scene of the series does not immediately transport us to the 19th century, but takes us on a fieldtrip with a group of school students. Against the backdrop of the Dybbøl mill, the history teacher tells a group of Danish youths, who are clearly bored and jaded, the basic facts about the battle that took place there in April 1864. This attempt to make the tale of the Second Schleswig War more contemporary by introducing a contemporary thread into the story, the protagonists of which discover and experience history, is not surprising at all. When they comment on history, they do not do it in a detached way, as they are victims of recent history themselves: of the Danish government's decision to send the military to Afghanistan, of technocracy, and of the heartless social care system. We see the socially maladjusted Claudia, whose psychological problems stem from a serious family crisis. Her brother was killed in the war, probably with the Taliban, far away from his Scandinavian homeland, while her parents, unable to cope with the tragedy, are totally confused. The social care system has almost given up on Claudia and her last chance is to take up a job caring for an old, infirm baron Severin, living in the nearby manor house. As we can easily guess, he is a descendant of the protagonists' of the 1864 storyline, who keeps the memoirs of his aunt, Inge, in a chest with family heirlooms; he perceives war in the "old" categories of honour and patriotism. Claudia, whom the old man requested to read the memoirs out loud, is slowly initiated into Danish history with successive each episode. Bornedal, not content with such an evolution, also provides us with a moment of *anagnorisis*: when Claudia learns that she too is a descendant of the story's protagonists. The role of Claudia is performed by Sarah Sofie Boussnina, a Danish actress of Tunisian origin-. But the worst battered by politics and war is the young count Didrick, whose character, already flawed, becomes completely twisted by the war.

Before the outbreak of the Second Schleswig War and the final, bloody defeat, the young, foppish master Didrick tries to impress his fellow revellers by telling them stories of his supposed valiant deeds during the First Schleswig War. He mimics Prussian soldiers by chanting "Tot, Tot" (death, death); of course this German battle cry does not scare the Danish, but instead rouses their fighting spirit. Didrick mocks the Prussians, whereas the director mocks his fellow countrymen. All these simple narrative devices are meant to suggest that the defeat of the Danish was brought about by their claim to the status of the chosen people, their over-ambitiousness, bragging, and their unwarrantedly high self-esteem. But Bornedal is definitely right about one thing and manages to avoid bias: the bloodbath of Dybbøl and Denmark's conflict with Chancellor Bismarck was not caused by "banal nationalism" (a term coined by Michael Billig)⁶; the Danish were motivated by earnest, vivid, and solemn patriotic feeling. This may have caused the Prussians to perceive the Danish as buffoonish.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 99.

⁵ Anders Hjort, *Retraete: "1864" tabte over 400000 seere i aftes*, „Politiken" 2014, 3. November.

⁶ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, Sage, London 1995.

By employing nation history in his socio-political commentary on current affairs Bornedal uses a well-established discourse, which in Denmark was shaped by the *kulturradikalisme* (cultural radicalism) movement⁷. The movement encouraged social change in modern Denmark and legitimised bias in artistic texts covering social themes. Increased social sensitivity, critical approach to religious worldview, the rejection of conservative moral norms, sexual conventions, and rules of family life, as well as its cosmopolitanism and antimilitarism, are considered to be the defining traits of *kulturradikalisme*. Some cultural radicals eventually ended up joining the ranks of the communists, but most entered the ranks of social democrats. *1864* seems to be the last homage paid to the movement. The movement's last representative, writer and poet Klaus Rifbjerg, died in April 2015. His passing was pronounced by the media to be the real end of cultural radicalism⁸. The radicals' antimilitarism was sometimes presented in its simplified, "for dummies" version. Ole Bornedal not only copies this attitude, but also exaggerates it. He also stresses the differences between old and modern sexual mores. When in the fourth episode Inge (portrayed by Marie Tourell Søderberg) informs her mother, who is wife to the administrator of Didrick's father's estate, that she is expecting an out-of-wedlock child by Laust, and is immediately met with expected social ostracism, she already has a prepared *radical* opinion on the situation: these are the times of change which will be shaped by the new, culturally open-minded generation. Inge then leaves for Southern Jutland in order to find the baby's father and impart to him the joyous news. Instead of Laust she meets captain Didrick, harbouring unwholesome jealousy, who wilfully lies to her that Laust has been killed. Inge does not despair. On the contrary: she follows the example of Swedish suffragettes and convinces the director of the field hospital to employ her, a pregnant woman, and her Gypsy confidante, as nurses. The mute Sofia, portrayed by Czech actress Eva Josefikova, is also expecting. She was raped by Didrick, who fantasised that he finally seized and possessed Inge.

3. We should not have been expecting a 19th century equivalent of the brilliant *Matador*, a historical TV series directed by Erik Balling and based on the idea of Lise Nørgaard, which has a status of a DR (Danmarks Radio) classic. Ole Bornedal, the director of *1864*, has earlier proven to be on the other side of the spectrum, which on one end is represented by the auteur cinema of André Bazin. Unlike the controversial Lars von Trier, Bornedal has no qualms to appeal to the mass audiences. His career opened with the commercial success of *Nattevagten*, a thriller later remade by Bornedal in Hollywood with Patricia Arquette, Nick Nolte, and Ewan McGregor, which proved to be a box office success. *I am Dina*, the adaptation of *Dina's Book* by the Norwegian novelist Herbjørg Wassmo, turns what is an interesting feminist and psychological text, free of simplifications, into a period melodrama with a number of exaggerated, naturalistic scenes. Jacob of Reinsnes, a merchant, is played by Gérard Depardieu. Perhaps we should not forget that before the French film star became a Russian by choice, he was first hired to play a Norwegian from the North of the Scandinavian Peninsula.

In the anniversary TV series Bornedal tries to turn the tackiness appealing to the masses into an asset. It is manifested in the caricatural portrayal of Bishop D.G. Monrad. Even on the cover of a recently published critical biography, which presents Monrad as a skilful, benevolent politician and zealous minister, he seems to be a man who is more serious and collected, and not a pathetic character displaying fragile state of the mind, supposedly inherited from his father⁹. The lessons in the art of public speaking which Monrad receives

⁷ Vide: *Den kulturradikale udfordring. Kulturradikalismen gennem 130 år*, ed. Claus Clausen i Lotte Folke Kaarsholm, Tiderne Skifter, København 2001. Runne Lykkeberg, *Kampen om sandhederne. Om det kulturelle borgerskabs storhed og fald*, Gyldendal, København 2008.

⁸ Michael Engaard, *Von Trier: Med Rifbjerg er kulturradikalismen død*, „Jyllands-Posten” 2015, 5. April.

⁹ Cf. Kai Just, *D. G. Monrad. Menneske og mand. Riget, magten og æren*, Hovedland, Gjern 2015.

from theatrical actress Johanne Luise Heiberg seem to mock the therapy sessions shown in the Academy Award-winning *The King's Speech*. Furthermore, while the attempt to make history more contemporary is not a transgression as such when done in the name of artistic licence, it seems absurd to turn one of the main heroes into some sort of an out-of-this-world clairvoyant mesmerizer and faith healer.

Whereas in *I am Dina* Bornedal shocked the audience with its naturalism, befitting the stereotypical portrayal of Northern Norway (e.g. it opens with Dina's mother dying after a vat of boiling lye is accidentally poured on her), in *1864* he decided to indulge himself when it comes to battle scenes. And so, just like prior to 2001 has the Polish cinema seen nothing like the Great Fire of Rome in *Quo Vadis*, the Danish cinema has never brought so much battle mayhem to the screen before. Bornedal has painstakingly recreated the trenches of Dybbøl on a field near Prague. The collaboration of Danish and Czech filmmakers is not incidental; the Czech capital has earlier served as the location for filming *En kongelig affære* with Mads Mikkelsen as Chancellor Struensee. Doubtlessly, Bornedal himself, but primarily his patrons and managers, hope to syndicate the series abroad to numerous TV stations around the world. Perhaps that is the reason why the cast of *1864* is largely the same as in another series that has already gained recognition outside the Nordic countries, *Borgen*, which David Runciman, political scientist from Cambridge, calls the proof of Denmark's high level of civilisation and cultural development¹⁰. And so, Torben Friis (Søren Malling), the TV producer, turns into a seer; Prime Minister Nyborg (Sidse Babett Knudsen), becomes Mrs. Heiberg; the spin doctor (Pilou Asbæk) becomes the squire. In Germany, the enemy during the Schleswig Wars, and therefore another country politically interested in the Danish anniversary, Bornedal's series was broadcast by the French-German Arte channel, and in the United Kingdom by BBC Four its British equivalent. But it is hard to consider Arte a mainstream television station. In Poland, *Borgen* was syndicated by Kino Polska. No TV station in Poland has so far announced plans to buy rights to broadcast *1864*.

4. It was not guaranteed that *1864* would be an artistic success, but that it would have impact on the discourse was certain. Besides, the anchoring of the series in the public debate was prepared well in advance by Bornedal's production team. The series has a clearly defined source of inspiration, mentioned in the final credits: the historical novel entitled *Slagtebænk Dybbøl. 18 april 1864*; *slagtebænk* literally means butcher's block. The book telling the story of the bloody defeat the Danish suffered at the hands of the Austro-Prussian coalition, written by Tom Buk-Swienty, was published much earlier, in 2008. The series had a safe and stable prop in the book, which was well received by the reviewers and readers. But the relationship of Bornedal's series and the contents of the book as well as Buk-Swienty's stance as a historiographer, will be discussed in detail later.

This four points, which illustrate why *1864* is not a new phenomenon, but a commentary in a pre-existing discourse, an expression of what was already articulated earlier, should be confronted with the reviews in Danish press published in late autumn 2014. They too proved to be predictable. Apart from the reviewers having mixed feelings regarding the principal matter of whether Ole Bornedal and his crew were intellectually competent in artistically handling the topic, their opinions as to particularities differed depending on the political and social worldview and the traditional political sympathies of the newspaper. This is attested by the number of stars (in Denmark six stars is traditionally the top mark) the series received from different reviewers. The first episode received five stars in the left-wing *Politiken*, whose first editors at the turn of the 20th century were the fathers of Danish radicalism: Viggo Hørup and Edvard Brandes. The moderately conservative *Jyllands-Posten* daily granted each of the series' first three episodes only three stars. These points, granted by critics representing Denmark's biggest opinion-forming dailies, indicate distinction; the

¹⁰ David Runciman, *Politics*, Profile Boos, London 2014, p. 37.

polarisation of tastes is almost a perfect example of what Pierre Bourdieu wrote about¹¹. These distinctions are based on the “model of the press system known in Danish literature on the subject as the four-paper system”¹², in which the biggest dailies traditionally express (although nowadays they may try to hide the fact) the views of the most important players on the political stage of the Folketing.

All that makes the three-star review of the second episode by the social democratic *Politiken*, the Danish social culture’s dominant *arbiter elegantiarum*, the more telling. The title of Henrik Palle’s article is laudatory: “1864 is a grand melodramatic production which can rival the best TV series from around the world”, but the enthusiasm he expressed in the article is moderate at best. He wrote of the embarrassing dialogues, which sound more comical than critical, and of the director’s inability to think critically. “The broad narration on how fanaticism and political bigotry can lead to a catastrophe is achieved in the series by employing the unrefined device of alternating between past and present, excessive bathos, and screenwriting abuse”¹³. *Jyllands-Posten* explicitly accused Børnedal of a biased portrayal of history. Journalist Mikkel Fyhn Christensen supported his accusations with the authority of Rasmus Glentshøj, a famous historian, who stated that “there are limits which a public broadcaster should not cross. Artists are due their creative freedom, also when introducing current problems into the discussion, but when 100 million kroner is invested by the state, they are also subjected to a responsibility which they failed to cope with in this case.”¹⁴

Ole Børnedal’s *1864* uses Tom Buk-Swienty’s book as a source of facts which he spectacularly frames, but it ignores the common-sense commentaries of the journalist and historian. *Slagtebænk Dybbøl* is not an example of trashy pop-history or a persuasive voice written in commission of a particular political faction, as one might expect from a book written on the occasion of an important historical anniversary and prepared with a so-called contemporary reader in mind. We might expect this, considering our experience with Polish practices in the field of “historical politics”. In contrast, Tom Buk-Swienty has diligently worked with sources: memoirs, letters, etchings, photos, and paintings. He adopts a reflective standpoint instead of writing Danish history anew or plucking opinions out of the air. The first thing he does is asserting that Prussia was not certain of its victory in a direct military confrontation with the Danes; the history of the region was not yet determined. Although in Børnedal’s series’ second episode there is a scene in which Bismarck, playing with his son’s toy soldiers, says the war with the Scandinavians will be *ein Übung*, a practice before the conquest of the rest of Europe, *1864* stresses the Prussian politician’s uncertainty and his mocking attitude towards the Danes. Tom Buk-Swienty points out how the interest of Danish historians and serious academics in the events that preceded and followed the Dybbøl defeat has markedly faltered after 1964, the first round anniversary of the battle¹⁵. In a way the society has positively verified the influence of year 1864, a turning point, on thoroughly restructuring the small country from the ground up. At the turn of the 1970s, diligent scholars and pre-war intellectuals step aside and the discourse of the welfare state society becomes

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, transl. Richard Nice, Routledge, London & New York 2010.

¹² Ewa Stasiak-Jazukiewicz, *Duńskie media*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa 2009, p. 60. Cf. Stig Hjarvard, *Den politiske presse. En analyse af danske avisers politiske orientering*, „Journalistica. Tidsskrift for forskning i journalistik” 2007, nr 5.

¹³ Henrik Palle, “1864” blev et storladent melodrama af international klasse, „Politiken” 2014, 30 November.

¹⁴ Mikkel Fyhn Christensen, DR’s ”1864”-satsning anklages for historieførvængning, „Jyllands-Posten” 2014, 3 Oktober.

¹⁵ Tom Buk-Swienty, *Slagtebænk Dybbøl. 18. April 1864. Historien om et slag*, Gyldendal, København 2008, p. 18-19.

increasingly marked by amnesia. Modern culture becomes a culture of permanent present (*nutidskultur*).

As Michael Böss reasons, “the culture of present is a culture characterised by an increasingly nonchalant attitude towards the past, while at the same time having no dreams or visions of the future. A society characterised by such a culture is in danger of completely ridding itself of its history.¹⁶” The way I believe we should understand it, is that the Danes do not celebrate *the events* in their history, but rather take pride in their identity (*dansk identitet*) and guard its integrity. Instead of diachrony they choose a synchronic order of unchanging Danishness (*danskhed*). After the 1945, there are fewer reasons to fear it would be threatened by the kingdom’s Southern neighbour. The successors of the Chancellor and the Führer have been rendered harmless by the world powers. The risk of a new German aggression on the Danish Straits decreases. The Bundesrepublik acts cautiously, more like a *småstat* than the Danish rump state itself; a wall is erected in Berlin, becoming the symbol of the Iron Curtain¹⁷. Oblivion helps to numb or hide all the historical resentments over Schleswig. Soon after the Second World War, the Danish government announced that it will not push to revise the border in Jutland¹⁸. Still, *gendarmstien* survived until 1958, when the duty of patrolling the border was transferred to the police. This “gendarmes’ path” is a 74 kilometre-long patrol route leading from Padborg to Hørupshav, which has since 1920 (when the Northern part of Schleswig returned to Denmark after a plebiscite – *genforening*) was patrolled by gendarmes, who kept an eye on the border and what was happening on its German side.

Therefore the renewed interest in Dybbøl in the 21st century, sparked by people like Buk-Swienty and Bornedal, mainly affects culture. It is not about determining and more accurately defining particular facts, as everything that could have been said in that respect was already said by the titans of historiography, such as Niels Neergaard and Erik Møller; rather, it is about the contemporary Danish identity. These emotions, however, only affect the debating elite. The general Danish population remains passive. They preferred to switch the TV to a sports channel before the middle of the shows run.

Ole Bornedal did not think *Slagtebænk Dybbøl* through well enough, and it is a valuable study, because it presents the complexity of the importance of year 1864 for the Danish culture. Buk-Swienty writes history, and this historiography has more than one layer of meaning: the importance of the Schleswig Wars functions on three levels. For the civilising process (in terms of Norbert Elias), the defeat of 18 April is a major turning point, an involuntary but successful step towards self-development and self-organisation of the society. As German socio-historian explains: “Today [in post-war time, *Studien über die Deutschen* was originally published in 1989], the Danes have regained their equilibrium. They think that they are a nice nation, that is pleasant to be a Dane¹⁹.” As for the sphere of social perception and cultural emotions, Dybbøl serves as a source of a major complex, which the Danes have managed to work through by the 1964 anniversary, when they began to warm to the benefits of living in a welfare state; the welfare obscured their traumas. And when speaking culture of discourse, 1864 is a political myth which serves as a tool to evaluate contemporary phenomena and public dilemmas.

Tom Buk-Swienty estimates the development of the myth on the first decade of the 21st century, coinciding with Denmark’s return to a more pro-active and aggressive international policy. Anders Fogh-Rasmussen, liberal prime minister and later secretary

¹⁶ Michael Böss, *Det demente samfund*, p. 8-9.

¹⁷ Magda Gawinecka-Woźniak, *Polska-Dania. Stosunki dwustronne w latach 1945-1968*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2015, p. 126-127.

¹⁸ Bo Lidegaard, *En fortælling om Danmark i det 20. århundrede*, Gyldendal 2011, p. 221-229.

¹⁹ Norbert Elias, *The Germans. Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, transl. Eric Dunning and Stephen Mellen, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 18.

general of NATO, sends Danish troops to Iraq to fight alongside the Americans; the heritage of 1864 is symbolically contested: the small country goes to a big war alongside a world power. If *Dybbøl* as a civilizational turning point and a source of complexes was important to Denmark's modern period, the political myth indicates and illustrates the most topical processes in the era of globalisation, the existence of global political hotspots, and the global economic crisis. In other words, *Dybbøl* governs the contemporary anxieties of the Danes. To prove that they are always somewhere near the surface we only need to look at the recent roles of Pilou Asbæk, which form a symptomatic trilogy: Second Lieutenant Sand in *9 April*, a war drama about the German invasion of Denmark; *Didrick*, fortune's fool in *1864*, commander Pedersen, accused of killing Afghan civilians in *Krigen* (a prospective Danish candidate for the Academy Award). These films tell of three wars important to Danish history. A more complete inventory of wars, spanning 500 years, is covered by a new exhibition in the Tøjhusmuseet in Copenhagen²⁰.

Bornedal is arbitrary in treating Buk-Swienty's book as his source of inspiration. Never mind that *Slagtebank Dybbøl*, although it does have some literary qualities, is not a book with a plot and cannot be simply transferred directly onto the screen. If we were to point to a common denominator of the book and the series, we could find it in mythisation, an unavoidable outcome of contemporary attempts to reconstruct the *theatrum* of year 1864. When we touch on a taboo subject it is impossible not to substitute the political and cultural myth, which laid the foundation for such a taboo, with a new, second-degree tale, a "myth of a myth", as we could call the phenomenon. Tom Buk-Swienty recreates the rich human context of the war events, whereas Ole Bornedal's series is a conventional revision, running along the tracks laid by the Danish cultural radicalism. When Buk-Swienty speaks of the revival of "the myth of 1864" during the last decade, he is aware that the anthropological term is widely used in a purely publicistic aspect and for branding labels in a superficial criticism of cultural phenomena. Bornedal brands events and historical characters with labels in order to hijack history. By attempting to be in the *avant-garde*, he actually places himself within the tradition stemming from the very middle of the 20th century.

Soon after *Slagtebank Dybbøl*, Tom Buk-Swienty publishes another piece of historical prose: *Dommedag Als*²¹. It is the next logical step to take and completely justified from the historiographic point of view. The battle of April 18 was not the end of the Second Schleswig war. It had its follow-up in the "Als Doomsday", a battle waged on 29 June 1864, on the Kær peninsula. This second defeat of the Danish army has finally and definitely decided the political marginalisation of Denmark, and Bismarck's troops occupied all of Jutland up to its tip in Skagen. But in Bornedal's series there is nothing after *Dybbøl*. What is more, the viewer is left with the conviction that D.G. Monrad has gone completely insane and that his political career was forever over. Since the bishop, a politician who was very distinguished in the creation of the modern Danish constitution, was completely forgotten in the 20th century, Bornedal could "invent" him practically from scratch and present him to the Danish public as a damage-doer²². Thereby, he glossed over the fact that Monrad left for New Zealand with his family in 1865, but returned to Denmark in 1871, and was active in church and state politics. He began regaining his former station by becoming the bishop of Nykøbing Falster²³.

After all, *1864* is not intended to be an audio-visual history textbook, but a myth of the myth of 1864. As Jerzy Bartkowski, a Polish political sociologist, suggests, "calling a given phenomenon a myth should not be associated with a certain class of objects (narrations), but

²⁰ Vide: <http://natmus.dk/museerne/toejhusmuseet/udstillinger/danmarks-krige> (30.10.2015).

²¹ Tom Buk-Swienty, *Dommedag Als. 29 juni 1864. Kampen for Danmark eksistens*, Gyldendal, København 2011.

²² Cf. Kai Just, *D. G. Monrad*, p. 394.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 345.

rather with a method of analysis, intended to highlight its social dimension.²⁴ Ole Bornedal takes on Danish history and directs it like it was a cheap melodrama, to complement it, and to make it agree with certain contemporary expectations. Employing mythisation in substitution of the commentary would explain why the series' viewership declined. It made no particular impression on a society dulled with "dementia" (Michael Böss), and so the domain of mythisation is characterized by non-contestation. Political myths function on a level elevated above the criterion of truth and falsehood.

If we look at historical and fictive characters as people who follow only one path of thinking, we will necessarily see only one of their dimensions. And so, Bornedal sees the Danish political stage of the mid-19th century as a collection of immature kids. Such radical attempts at historical revisionism expressed in ritualised dissociation, direct both politicians and creators of artistic culture towards mythisation of myths. The most uproarious acts of myth-debunking are of course most easily created basing on heroic and martyrological tales, previously attesting to national greatness and serving as sources of national pride. Modern cultural discourses can also subsist on such past deeds which are particularly attractive on account of them being nothing to be proud of, but which can serve as a good excuse for demonstrative self-mortification

The fact that between the late 1960s and the beginning of the 21st century the discussion on the subject of the Danish-Prussian conflict has quieted down, or that in Danish culture no need to dissociate from Dybbøl ever became apparent, does not contradict what was said earlier. It proves that over the one hundred years since the great defeat, the Danish identity has become crystallised, integrated, and fixed. And by 1964 the welfare state is complete in the sense of having amassed the social capital. It works, so it puts a taboo on its painful origins. Judging by the viewership and reception of *1864*, it is not the broad masses of society but mainly the elites that began to notice the problem of Danish culture approaching a turning point. Turning points are now again on their minds because of the round anniversary of the defeat Denmark suffered at the hands of Prussia. The definite end of Danish modernity, which originated from the defeat of 1864, appears to come as a smooth transition, but it nevertheless looms ahead.

²⁴ Jerzy Bartkowski, *Lokalne podania historyczne jako wyraz aktywności mitotwórczej*, in: *Mity polityczne i stereotypy w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa*, ed. Eugeniusz Ponczek i Magdalena Reksć, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2015, p. 37.