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"ONE ADMIRES BEFORE ONE KNOWS WHY"
—a comparative study of the art of myth in tales by Isak Dinesen, Ernest Hemingway, and Peter Høeg

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university, that it is entirely my own work, and that the Department of Comparative Literature, University of Aarhus, Denmark, may lend or copy it on request.

Cecilie Mose Outzen

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SUMMARY IN DANISH

Specialet "One admires before one knows why" har, som titlen indicerer, en umiddelbar beundring for Karen Blixen, Ernest Hemingway og Peter Høeg som sit tekstuelle forlæg og komparative udgangspunkt. Forordet henleder opmærksomheden på idéen om et fælles tematisk grundlag hos de tre forfattere, der er koncentreret omkring skæbnesyn, kunstnerens betydning og individets eksistentielle rolle i teksterne.

Introduktionen peger på disse temaer som led i forfatternes *mytiske* "dagsorden" og polemiserer over spørgsmålet om et universelt, mytisk mønster i deres historier eller det modsatte: en afvisning af mytens betydning, udtrykt gennem et myte-relateret fald eller nederlag som central pointe i historierne. Det dualistiske spørgsmål finder sin kritiske modpol i en teoretisk gennemgang af Northrop Fryes litteraturkritik overfor Hans Blumenbergs—foruden medierende kritiske synspunkter af blandt andre Robert Langbaum og Astradur Eysteinsson—og pilotanalysen af Blixens "Den Udødelige Historie" er indsat før det teoretiske kapitel som en "appetitvækker," der udtrykker fortællingernes repræsentative, mytiske hovedbestanddele samt operativerne for en myte-analytisk tilgang.

Fryes såkaldte *displacement* af myten overfor Blumenbergs mytiske *begær* fungerer som vigtige teoretiske begreber angående bestemmelsen af en generel mytisk struktur eller manglen på samme i de analyserede historier. Analysekapitlet koncentrerer sig om en kunstnerisk selv-bevidsthed i Blixens "Dykkeren," der på den måde kommer til at fungere som endnu en pilotanalyse, hvorefter det analytiske materiale deles op i fire kategorier, primært beskæftigede med transformations- og forandringsaspekter som narrative kunstgreb, der blotlægger teksternes mytiske pointer.

Diskussionen og de følgende kommentarer opsummerer specialets delkonklusioner og analytiske observationer, hvorefter mytens omfang og rolle i forfatternes historier determineres som *tragisk* og bestående af et mytisk *ricorso* i teksterne, en indre *tvivl* hos protagonisterne samt deres essentielle *lidelse* som eneste mulighed for indsigt. Denne inddeling diskuteres som led i fortællingernes *katharsis*, eller anti-samme, som

manifestationen af en grundlæggende *længsel* efter mytisk autenticitet, men ligeledes tilkendegivelsen af denne autenticitets tab og ikke-eksistens, hvilket efterlader tekstpersonerne uforløste—narrationen fremstår derved som en art tragisk udtryk, der bekræfter Blumenbergs teori om myten som en reminiscens af fortiden i moderne litteratur, et ekko af en baggrund. Således stiller specialet sig afvisende overfor Fryes strukturering af litterære tekster i overensstemmelse med et mytisk princip, eller det modificerer i hvert fald Fryes "quest-myth" til kun at gøre sin betydning gældende i forbindelse med "fall"- og "exile"-stadierne i moderniteten.

Der foreligger dog en mediering af den moderne myte-separation via Astradur Eysteinssons kritik, som en a-historisk forening af den abstrakte myte og tekstens autonomi i moderne fortolkning. Eysteinssons pointe omkring myten er, at den har sin oprindelse i selve menneskets eksistens, og frem for at strande ved "en kunst uden konsekvenser," kan Eysteinssons sammensmeltning af mytens struktur med den a-historiske modernitet fremproducere en helt ny enhed.

Således konkluderer specialet, at analysernes pointe ikke så meget ligger i selve det tragiske—der i virkeligheden er implicit i de tre forfattere—som i den umiddelbare umulighed af en mytisk systematisering, som vi kender den fra Frye og et traditionelt, litteraturhistorisk underordningssystem.

PREFACE

My thesis "One admires before one knows why" is not simply motivated by its requirement for the completion of a Master of Arts in Comparative Literature; it expresses my primary wish to promote the excellent tales of the Danish storyteller Karen Blixen, also known as Isak Dinesen, as well as of her fellow countryman and modern successor, Peter Høeg. Moreover, writing in English is a way of targeting a broad and international audience, but also a means of bridging the gap between the Danish and American focus of my thesis—the tales of Dinesen and Høeg versus Ernest Hemingway's short stories—and draw the attention to their narrative, interpretative similarities, instead of to their linguistic differences.

Prior to this paper, my interest in the two Danish writers—and in the discrepancy between representations of art and reality in literary works—had become infused with some sense of a common, aesthetic ground for Dinesen and Høeg, a potentially basic definition of their narrative themes and views which represents the very reason for an imbalance between expressions of life and artistic awareness in their texts. In my view, this basic definition seemed, and still seems, to be related to a *mythical* starting point, the narrative idea of archetypal themes and patterns in the stories which either reproduce the effects of original myths, or result in their dissolution and negation.

Hemingway's entrance into my project happened, in a way, by chance. In the fall of 1997, I was reading many of his short stories, and it suddenly occurred to me how similar his determinism was to Dinesen's views on fate and destiny. Though completely different in style and language, both Hemingway and Dinesen seem to work with protagonists in search of their proper, existential role in life, attempting to hold on to, or re-encounter, a former world order which has been lost.

The background for my thesis project is therefore an experience of an overall mythical *longing*, present in both Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg, and expressed by means of a general *tragic* outlook, according to which *misery* is the only way to insight for the

characters whose achievements and victories lead to their destruction or submission to greater forces beyond their individual reach.

My comparative analyses of these elements borrow their interpretative contents from tales that represent different phases of the three authorships. From "Syndfloden over Norderney" and "Aben" in Dinesen's *Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger* from the 1930s, to "En Historie om en Perle" in *Vinter-Eventyr* from 1942, and to "Dykkeren," "Storme," and "Den Udødelige Historie" in *Skæbne-Anekdoter* from 1957, we see a narrative development toward subtler irony as well as an increasing artistic self-awareness in Dinesen's writings.

The Hemingway short stories that I have used for this paper all belong to his "first forty-nine" from the 1930s, and they generally represent a lean and direct style, saturated with dialogue, but image-drained, whereas Høeg's stories—all from his 1990-collection *Fortællinger om natten*, published in the beginning/middle of his authorship—express a Dinesen-esque, layered, and symbolic style and subject matter. These seemingly different writers somehow connect in terms of a common, mythical foundation which I will attempt to clarify and elucidate by means of theoretical points on myth by critics such as Northrop Frye, Hans Blumenberg, and Astradur Eysteinsson—Frye representing an adherence to a mythical principle in all of literature, Blumenberg advocating the rejection of myth significance in today's literary works, and Eysteinsson functioning as a sort of "mediator" between these two critical opposites, transcending dissolved modernity by means of a *new* unity of myth.

Thus, I admire—before knowing why—the intertextual idea of a mythical relation between Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg. In the following, I shall find out exactly how the three writers unite within, or correspond to, myth as the foundation of a narrative thematic structure.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE ART OF MYTH AS UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

The American critic Robert Langbaum was one of the first scholars to discover and worship the art of Isak Dinesen. He devoted his *The Gayety of Vision* from 1964 to the study of her writings and remarked:

> Isak Dinesen is an important writer because she has understood the tradition behind her and has taken the next step required by that tradition. Like the other, more massive writers of her generation … she takes off from a sense of individuality developed in the nineteenth century to the point of morbidity, and leads that individuality where it wants to go. She leads it back to a *universal principle* and a connection with the external world. The universal principle is the unconscious life of man and nature, which, welling up in the human consciousness *as myth*, is the source of civilization, individual consciousness, and our concept of God's unlimited consciousness (italics mine).[1]

The importance of Langbaum's statement involves, first of all, his observations on the relation between tradition and the modern in Dinesen. Although Dinesen's stories often take place in a pastoral, romantic world of depraved aristocracy, of old wise men and witch-like women, of faded prima donnas, innocent nymphs, and brave young sailors, Langbaum characterizes Dinesen as an explicitly *modern* writer, arguing that "she is dealing with the same distinctively modern themes"[2] as writers whose works are more naturalistic in their composition.

In his book, Langbaum seeks to demonstrate how "Isak Dinesen has restored a magical quality to fiction,"[3] but also to ascertain that her magic is by no means limited to a

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[1] Robert Langbaum, The Gayety of Vision. A Study of Isak Dinesen's Art (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), 53.

[2] Ibid., 2.

[3] Ibid., 1.

mere representation of fantastic entertainment—that her stories have a great deal of "relevance to modern life."[4]

Furthermore, Langbaum makes some interesting remarks on Dinesen's oscillation between the faithfulness to a Romantic, aristocratic heritage and the incorporation of a modern version of psychological subject matters. By employing old narrative forms, such as tragedy, comedy, pastoral, and literature of chivalry, as a framework for the story—an outer, cultural representation of the inner, psychological life of the characters—Dinesen creates a crucial polarization between the values of old times and modernity's dissolution of the spiritual and physical unity of the being.

While modern "psychological analysis has … tended to dissolve the outlines of character and dissipate the magic or glory of life it dealt with," it is Langbaum's point that "Dinesen's method is a way of reconciling the knowledge of life with the praise of it."[5] Thus, the endeavor to "salvage" the aesthetic foundation of a bygone world and transfer it into a modern representation signifies the artistic project not only of Dinesen, but of many of her contemporaries as well, such as Rilke, Kafka, Mann, Joyce, Eliot, and Yeats.[6]

The other significant part of my initial Langbaum quotation—myth as a universal principle—concerns the consequences of Dinesen's above unification of "the old order and the new," as Langbaum characterizes it.[7] According to him, the central myth in Romantic literature is "the secularized and psychologized version of the central myth of Christianity—*the myth of the fall and redemption*" (italics mine).[8] But the fall of the Romantics also implies a loss of cognitive knowledge, together with the belief in a moral choice that can regain an even

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[4] Langbaum, 1.

[5] Ibid., 3.

[6] Cf. ibid., 53.

[7] Ibid., 1.

[8] Ibid., 51.

greater Eden than the lost stage of innocence.[9] In Dinesen's tales, her characters make choices that alter the events, but in such a fashion that a pattern *beyond* their intention is revealed. The characters become marionettes of a story in which their destiny strives to transcend from nature into art. They submit to the art form by means of a metamorphosis, and "sometimes they take on the mythical identities required by some other form of art."[10] But at the same time, in this transcendence and submission, the question emerges whether the universal myth itself does not take on some other form as well, whether myth can actually be transformed into the reality of the beings without consequences that imply the destruction of its universality.

Subsequently, in order to understand Dinesen's narrative standpoint, it is important to recognize that her "reconciliation" of romantic and psychological subject matters into a potential, universal principle of myth actually springs from an idea of *multiplicity* in the artistic creation, present in Dinesen's plots, characters and identities, and levels of narration. Her stories are permeated with masks and mirrors, but, more importantly, with *opposites*, stretching from pronounced, dialectical archetypes—such as man versus woman, good versus evil, or reality versus dream—to more subtle discrepancies based on Dinesen's personal biography, for instance "the violent contrast in her life of Europe and Africa."[11] These violent contrasts signify important artifices in all of Dinesen's writing, and it is my assumption that her concept of myth—as a possible unity assembled from a narrative multiplicity—is related to similar patterns in other authorships and forms the basis of many modern writers, as a thematic or epochal intertextuality, even in those artists whose works seem remarkably different from Dinesen's in terms of style, language, and contents.

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[9] Cf. Langbaum, 52.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 6.

Thus, as an example, I posit that Ernest Hemingway—despite his style of "honest reporting"—resembles Dinesen by means of his fatalistic outlook; his narrative emphasis on *expression* and *destiny*. But first of all, Hemingway's works are related to the short stories of Isak Dinesen in that both writers share an artistic interest in Africa as well as in aristocratic values. Langbaum makes a cross-comparison between the two, stating that in Dinesen's art, the aristocrat is a stranger who has lost his natural position in civilization whereas in Hemingway, aristocracy is a lost part of nature.[12] For example, I see a clear connection between Dinesen's proud descriptions of the Kikuyus or the antelope Lulu in *Den Afrikanske Farm* (*Out of Africa*) and Nick Adams's pure camping experiences in Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River." In both texts, the different, "higher" beings are estranged or isolated from the rest of the world.

Other characteristics common to Dinesen and Hemingway are outlined by the Danish critic Elsa Gress. Aside from stating that Hemingway's authorship is more influenced by the European inter-war period than by America "of old," Gress draws attention to the interesting parallels between Dinesen and Hemingway's determinist views. To Hemingway, the role of the individual is simply to endure life; there is no choice and no hope—the only virtue is courage.[13] Spiritual and artistic as well as physical courage also represents a theme in many of Dinesen's tales, but her idea of a *choice* is more complex than that of her American colleague. In Dinesen's world, it is exactly the individual *choices* of the characters that shape their lives. The possibility of choosing *exists*, but at the same time, it is what leads the characters toward their determined destiny. Gress also notes that both Dinesen and Hemingway are much more powerful in artistic expression than in their philosophical foundation, but she underlines the contrast between Hemingway's plain, demanding style—

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[12] Cf. Langbaum, 5.

[13] Cf. Elsa Gress, "Den Amerikanske Litteratur," in Moderne Litteratur efter 1914, ed. Carl Stief (København: Gyldendal, 1950), 395.

his intensive study of a momentary and present-tense narrative—and Dinesen's ornamented, layered tales that all relate to a past.

Another example of a writer who employs elements of style, language, and subject matter similarly to Isak Dinesen, is the Danish author Peter Høeg. He is still a fairly recent phenomenon on the literary scene and therefore, his critical bibliography is yet sparsely represented. But articles and reviews of his books form the impression of a storyteller whose narrative awareness and implementation of myth, moral, and destiny are of Dinesen-esque dimensions, particularly in his collection of stories by the name of *Fortællinger om natten* (*Tales of the Night*). However, Høeg's relation to Dinesen and myth is very different from Hemingway's and signifies a more direct lineage from the Danish writer in terms of language and style. In *Fortællinger om natten*, some of his stories contain such obvious parallels to specific Dinesen-tales that comparative analyses are self-evident. Yet, Høeg takes his archetypal, universal themes to narrative conclusions other than Dinesen's; more than the baroness, Høeg mixes a precise representation of reality with extreme para-psychological incidents, and *suspension* constitutes a strong narrative, textual effect. But in the opening story "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte," Africa functions as a mythological point of origin and a representative of universality, just as in Dinesen and Hemingway. Moreover, masks and mirrors appear in nearly all of Høeg's stories as crucial means of achieving artistic recognition. For Høeg's textual errand is a blend of a search for moral insight in love and truth and the thematic investigation of the nature of *art*, its potency, or its limitations.

In a newspaper review, Lotte Thyrring Andersen characterizes Høeg's artistic concern as *modernistic*, observing that he searches aspects of a culture in decay, and that his protagonists reflect a longing for a better, bigger, and more perfect world order.[14] Thus, Høeg resembles Dinesen who, as mentioned and according to Robert Langbaum, reconciles a romantic, pastoral representation and a "modern" psychological analysis of the individual.

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[14] Cf. Lotte Thyrring Andersen, review of Fortællinger om natten, by Peter Høeg, in Land & Folk (25 October 1990).

Høeg's characters, like Dinesen's, are romantic visionaries, or artists cut off from a normal life. The way to insight is always painful in both writers, but Erik Svendsen remarks—in his article "Peter Høegs Skyggesider"—that Dinesen's figures reach an understanding by means of a *loosening* of the story's momentum, whereas the characters in Høeg obtain their knowledge through his textual *tightening* of the plot.[15] The narrative relevance of myths and archetypes in Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg therefore founds its strength upon a thematic intertextuality between the three writers as well as an alternation between unification and multiplicity within the study of myth.

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This textual movement of unification and multiplicity finds its parallel in literary criticism, particularly in Canadian Northrop Frye. His two substantial works on theory, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and *Fables of Identity* (1963), function as significant instruments of a deeper, analytical understanding. Prior to his two books, Frye had published an essay named "The Archetypes of Literature" (1950) which was later incorporated into the *Anatomy*. In this essay, Frye posits:

> I suggest that what is at present missing from literary criticism is a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as part of a whole.[16]

Frye's wish for a "methodological discipline and coherence of the sciences"[17] plays a central role in his paradigmatic criticism. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, he develops this theoretical errand, claiming that "there is a finite number of valid critical methods, and … they can all be

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[15] Cf. Erik Svendsen, "Peter Høegs Skyggesider," Bogens Verden 79, no. 3 (1997): 15.

[16] Northrop Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," in 20th Century Literary Criticism, ed. David Lodge (London and New York: Longman Group Limited, 1972), 424.

[17] Ibid., 421.

contained in a single theory."[18] According to Frye, only one organizing principle has so far been discovered in literature, namely that of chronology.[19] Chronology is linked to tradition, making literary history a coherent succession of sequences. "But when so many poets use so many of the same images, surely there are much bigger critical problems involved than biographical ones," Frye notes.[20]

Consequently, he suggests that we "see literature, not only as complicating itself in time, but as spread out in conceptual space from *some kind of center that criticism could locate*" (italics mine).[21] This center—or this theory containing all valid critical methods—is founded upon the recurrence of certain *archetypes* and *myths*. In *Fables of Identity*, Frye extends the idea of "mythos examined as a simultaneous unity,"[22] but he also establishes a conflict which is latent in this kind of study. On the one hand, Frye states that:

> Literary shape cannot come from life; it comes only from literary tradition, and so ultimately from myth.[23]

But on the other, he claims that:

> Every poet has his own private mythology, his own spectroscopic band or peculiar formation of symbols, of much of which he is quite unconscious.[24]

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[18] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism; four essays (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 72.

[19] Cf. Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 16.

[20] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 426.

[21] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 17.

[22] Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity. Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), 24.

[23] Ibid., 36.

[24] Ibid., 11.

If literary tradition is based on myth, but if myth is also defined individually from poet to poet, then Northrop Frye's construction of an anatomy of criticism is a considerable task; not only is he attempting to set up a general, conceptual framework for literary, critical studies, he wants to extract this scheme from diverging poets' presumably diverging mythologies. However, it is Frye's exact point that all literary varieties can be gathered critically under one "central myth of literature"[25] which is the quest-myth.

Thus, Frye claims that myths form the basic pattern in all literary as well as critical consciousness and moreover; that literature derives from two main tendencies: 1) a mimetic tendency and 2) a tendency to write stories about characters who can do anything.[26] I would like to test if Frye's critical train of thought influences or alters the intertextual study of the art of myth in Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg's stories, if his theoretical methods activate or generate a more significant, critical understanding of the mythical theme in the three writers. However, this paper's theoretical foundation cannot rely exclusively on Northrop Frye's criticism. First of all, Frye himself has been accused—in the *Anatomy*—of employing too simple and undifferentiated an operative division of periods, as well as of ignoring the recurrence and re-creation of earlier modes in literary history, as Jan Ulrik Dyrkjøb points out.[27] The Danish critic also underlines the fact that only one particular literary tradition is promoted in Frye's work, namely biblical interpretation.[28] As a digression, it is important to note that Northrop Frye does not relate his theoretical views to myth criticism *per se*, and any kinship with for example Carl Gustav Jung's mythical theories is sharply rejected by Frye. He describes Jung as a determinist who is "substituting a critical attitude with criticism" and who is "proposing … not to find a conceptual framework for

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[25] Frye, "Archetypes of Literature," 431.

[26] Cf. Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 51.

[27] Cf. Jan Ulrik Dyrkjøb, Northrop Fryes Litteraturteori (København: Berlingske Forlag, 1979), 115-116.

[28] Cf. ibid., 142.

criticism within literature, but to attach criticism to one of a miscellany of frameworks."[29] Dealing with Frye later on, we shall see if he himself is totally independent of determinist standpoints.

But secondly, other critics and scholars have contributed substantially to the literary discussion of myth. One of them is Hans Blumenberg whose enormous *Arbeit am Mythos* from 1979 launches the hypothesis that Frye's "biblical world" is nearly un-present in literary manifestations of today.[30] Further, it is Blumenberg's point that "es wird keine Geschichte mehr erzählt, sondern nur ein Hintergrund von Wünschen, von Ablehnung, von Machtwillen berührt [stories are no longer told, only a background of wishes, rejection, and will to power is touched upon]."[31] Myths no longer exist, only as elements of a foundation and starting point for literary creativity—in my theoretical chapter, I will discuss the possible, textual consequences of Frye's and Blumenberg's divergent statements.

* * *

Thus, the methodological procedure of my thesis will be a thematic concentration on Isak Dinesen as a representative of "ground zero" definitions of the art of myth in destiny tales. Furthermore, perceiving Peter Høeg and Ernest Hemingway as her inspired "successors," I will perform comparative analyses of their stories which fall into four categories emphasizing the characters and their destinies, their transformation, their attempt to control the story's plot, or the change of the events beyond their control. It is my aim to define the role of these themes in the stories as well as to evaluate their intertextual significance in the three writers. As examples, I will pay attention to Høeg's characters in relation to Dinesen's—are they marionettes? What is his perspective on the possible

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[29] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 6.

[30] Cf. Hans Blumenberg, Arbeit am Mythos (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 239. All non-English quotes are supplied with my own English translations.

[31] Ibid., 248.

transcendence between nature and art? Also, in Hemingway's case, I would like to investigate whether an explicitly artistic transcendence can be said to take place for his "natural" human being.

Further, I wish to outline Frye's stringent, critical "program" as an examination of its potential capacity to expose and elucidate the narrative essences of my analyses. My interest in Northrop Frye's critical theories rests on an immediate agreement with his main statement that literary criticism lacks structure and unity. Frye is excessively schematic in his pursuance of this theory and scorns mere "value judgments" which, in his view, represent the narrow-minded occupation of most other critics. It is my conviction that Frye's sharp distinctions, fearless statements, and genuinely rational approach to the theoretical, critical field constitute some of the main reasons why his works are still considered critically valid today.

I will put my interpretations into perspective by examining their capability of forming a likewise sharp and fearless, coherent idea of mythical storytelling. By means of a double investigation—one theoretical and one analytical—I will seek to demonstrate that different narrative expressions such as Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg's, extract their subject matter from some similar mythological, archetypal source which—when further specified in my analyses—either verify the existence of Frye's organizing principle or affirm Blumenberg's idea of myth as a dissolved, but still sought after, textual foundation.

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In the conclusion of *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye characterizes the point of his book as that of "reforging the broken links between creation and knowledge, art and science, myth and concept."[32] Let me formulate the point of this paper as that of *re*-presenting the comparative awareness of an intertextuality whose criteria are not biographical evidence, but general themes which can be narrowed down and specified

[32] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 354.

through textual analysis; and also of reminding scholars and readers of literature that the starting point for storytelling has been the wish to copy and mime all that is great, to tell fantastic stories about eminent beings who can do anything—"one admires before one knows why."[33] Consulting the modern tales of Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg, we shall see if this starting point is still valid.

Before carrying out the theoretical part of my paper, I insert a "pilot analysis" of Dinesen's "Den Udødelige Historie" as a precise and defining presentation of the main constituents and essences of the mythical discussion field, in particular the problem of "translating" myth into reality which I alluded to in the beginning of this chapter.

[33] Langbaum, 1.

CHAPTER 2

"DEN UDØDELIGE HISTORIE": IMMORTAL ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING

In his critical work *Ingen skygge uden lys*, the Danish scholar Hans Holmberg emphasizes how art and the artist form the center of Dinesen's works.[34] Her belief in a pattern, and in this pattern's *artistic* nature, is the foundation of her aesthetic mythology. The idea of the artist as the chosen one, as a person more skilled than others in understanding God's plan, is expressed in the characters' longings and achievements; during the stories, they become aware of the idea of their creator and learn how to act according to their outlined destiny.[35] Thus, the ideal, existential condition for Dinesen's figures is to be one with the artistic feeling, to be fully integrated in aesthetic coherence, as Holmberg puts it.[36]

"Den Udødelige Historie" represents a perfect example of the process of learning that Dinesen's characters go through, in order to fit into the large scheme of existence in which they are only small parts. Initially, we are introduced to Mr Clay, the rich tradesman whose name is associated with both the substance of the earth and a corpse, but also with James Joyce's short story "Clay," about Maria who is a "living dead." Mr Clay is himself a dying man, and rumors about his actions earlier in life support the notion of an emotionally cold being who desires only money. As a mock-confession in the tale, the young bookkeeper, Elishama, reads aloud from the account books by Mr Clay's bedside every night. Elishama, too, is a cold man, but, opposite Mr Clay, he has no desire in the world—surrounded by greed we see "den fuldkomne Mangel paa Ærgerrighed i den unge Mands egen Sjæl [the complete lack of desire in the young man's own soul]."[37]

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[34] Cf. Hans Holmberg, Ingen skygge uden lys (København: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1995), 95.

[35] Cf. ibid., 98.

[36] Cf. ibid., 103.

[37] Karen Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter (Haslev: Gyldendal, 1958), 154.

However, both characters contain a potential for something else, a hidden passion: Elishama has kept the Hebrew inscription given to him by an old man, when he himself was an abandoned child on the run from his country; and Mr Clay has once heard a story many years ago at sea, about a young sailor who was paid by an old man to spend the night with his beautiful wife.

By means of Mr Clay's decision to re-create this story in reality, and because both men thus have a secret, faded connection with myths of the past, Mr Clay and Elishama are approaching the essential longings of man—the staging of the story becomes an alleviation of their existential hopes and disappointments. Elishama is aware of this function of storytelling, as he explains to the old man in part IV of "Den Udødelige Historie":

> De Sømænd, som fortæller denne Historie, Mr Clay, er fattige og lever et ensomt Liv paa Søen. Det er derfor de fortæller om det rige Hus og den smukke Dame. Men den Historie, som de fortæller, har aldrig fundet Sted.[38]
>
> [The sailors relating this story are poor and lead a lonely life at sea. This is why they tell of the rich house and the beautiful lady. But the story they are telling has never taken place.]

And Elishama goes on describing the universal principles of storytelling to Mr Clay, employing a parallel from their own business world of accounts and numbers:

> Det strider imod Loven for Tilbud og Efterspørgsel, Mr Clay, og det er aldrig sket, og det vil aldrig ske, og det er derfor det bliver fortalt.[39]
>
> [It is against the law of supply and demand, Mr Clay, and it has never happened, and it will never happen, and that is why it is told.]

Consequently, Mr Clay's attempt to stage the sailor myth involves a transfiguration of the characters: Elishama's mythical understanding turns him into a prophet who—like Isaiah in

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[38] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 164.

[39] Ibid., 165.

his prophecy from the Bible, Elishama's personal myth—predicts the story as it will happen and yet cannot happen; Mr Clay becomes the God-like creator who manipulates the destinies of the young sailor and the coquette Virginie—"thi han bevægede sig i Nat i en Verden, som var skabt efter hans egen Vilje og paa hans Ord [for tonight, he was moving within a world created by his own will and upon his word]."[40] By playing the part of the beautiful woman, Virginie—who is the daughter of a French business connection ruined and indirectly killed by Mr Clay who also took over his house and thus, evicted the wife and children—symbolizes the fallen Madonna, a woman whose destiny is to live like a prostitute and serve her father's archenemy and "slayer."

In this archetypal plot the myth of the fall is relived. Mr Clay is the creator and God who brings together his Adam and Eve—Povl and Virginie[41]—and Elishama is both the "tempter" and "helper" who makes obvious the fall of Virginie, but who also leads the figures to new insights. To remain within a biblical symbolism, the sailor Povl is meant to be sacrificed as an innocent lamb upon the altar of immortal stories. But Mr Clay miscalculates his project; the myth may come alive as planned, and the participating marionettes meet and separate the way they were intended to, but in order for Elishama's (and Isaiah's) prophecy to come true—that stories are told because they will never happen—Mr Clay's staged story cannot be identical with its original myth. Elishama asks himself: "Hvordan vilde det gaa, naar han [Mr Clay] fra Virkelighedens Verden skulde bevæge sig over i Fantasiens [What would happen when he [Mr Clay] was to move from the world of reality to that of fantasy]?"[42]

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[40] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 201.

[41] As a curiosity, consider Dinesen's interesting imitation of Bernardin de Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1787), about the half-siblings who love each other, but cannot stay together on their heavenly island of happiness.

[42] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 190.

What actually happens is this: after his night in the house, Povl attempts to change his fate and stay with Virginie—"'Jeg gaar ikke fra Dig!' raabte han. 'Ingen i Verden skal faa Lov at skille os. Aldrig! Aldrig!' ['I'm not leaving you!' he shouted. 'No one in the world will I allow to separate us. Ever! Ever!']."[43] But Virginie reminds Povl that he received the money and made a promise to the old man—to do what he was paid for, and then leave—and these are values that the honest and sincere young man cannot ignore. However, materialism plays a role, since Povl will now be able to buy his own boat and thus, eventually, he chooses Virginie the ship over Virginie the woman.

As for Mr Clay, "hans Triumfs Bæger havde været for stærkt for ham [his cup of triumph had been too strong for him]," as Elishama remarks.[44] The old man has finally fallen asleep, but therefore, he is unable to enjoy the fulfillment of his creation. Like God on the seventh day, Mr Clay is now resting, and Elishama concludes that "naar en Historie blev gjort til Virkelighed, fik Sjælen Ro [when a story was made real, the soul was at peace]"[45]—Mr Clay, the living dead, has finally been put at rest. Thus, Isaiah's words have to some extent come true; fruitful achievements have occurred within a barren being, and two people have experienced a brief moment of perfect happiness. But the story's realization and Mr Clay's redemption are only ostensible, for the real myth has not been captured and staged, as Povl makes clear to Elishama: "Den Historie ligner sletikke det som jeg har oplevet.… Jeg vilde ikke fortælle det … for hundrede Gange fem Guineas [that story does not at all resemble what I have experienced.… I would not tell it … for a hundred times five guineas]."[46]

Reality is never like the myth, and experienced moments of myth-like nature and appearance can never "read" like the myth itself. For the immortal story is precisely the

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[43] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 209.

[44] Ibid., 212.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 215.

longing for the dream *itself*, not reality—therefore, stories must remain stories. The conch at the end of Dinesen's tale symbolizes this immortal longing in man which is ever-ceasing, no matter what "stories" he experiences in real life. Povl's peaceful expression when he puts the conch to his ear is also seen in Elishama's face as he imitates the sailor, and in the sea-shell, the bookkeeper encounters "en ny Stemme i Huset, og i Historien [a new voice in the house, and in the story]":

> „Jeg har hørt den før," tænkte han, „for længe siden. For længe, længe siden. Men hvor?"[47]
>
> [„I have heard it before," he thought, „a long time ago. A long, long time ago. But where?"]

Thus, Elishama, as the intermediary between creator and created—or the artist and his artwork—becomes one with the artistic feeling in "Den Udødelige Historie," because he understands the pattern of myth and storytelling as being the prophecies of Isaiah, representing the immortal story, together with the eternal longing within man for something else than life, namely the longing itself.

But, as Holmberg underlines, the pattern in Dinesen's story is not only mythical, but artistic as well. By means of demonstrating the impossibility of changing one's fate and of miming myths in life, an artistic purpose is revealed which, according to Dinesen's friend and colleague Thorkild Bjørnvig, proves "det forrykte i at forsøge at anvende historiens love på livet [the madness in attempting to apply the laws of the narrative to life]."[48] In "Den Udødelige Historie," the characters' consciousness of the story in the story drives back this insight, whereupon the story takes possession of life.[49]

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[47] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 217.

[48] Thorkild Bjørnvig, Pagten (Viborg: Gyldendals Paperbacks, 1985), 185.

[49] Ibid.

Bjørnvig also draws attention to Elishama's intellectual origin, claiming that Dinesen patterned him on the Danish poet Jørgen Gustava Brandt[50] and this suggests, in my view, that Elishama functions as the actual artist in Dinesen's story, "the chosen one" who moves toward a complete understanding of the art of myth. What he and the other characters arrive at in terms of cognitive awareness is that their sense of individuality has yielded to a larger, archetypal notion of man's subconscious nature. The hidden passions of Elishama and Mr Clay have taken over and transfigured the multiple individualities of the story into marionettes who are not united and controlled by Mr Clay, but by the sailor myth and Isaiah's prophecy, as mere representative beings corresponding with universal characteristics and principles. Thus, Mr Clay, Elishama, the sailor, and Virginie *become* their roles, but their staged acts can never mime the myth entirely, and I will return to this interesting polemization by Dinesen in my analyses and discussion.

By the end of "Den Udødelige Historie," Elishama is left with a strange sense of connection between Isaiah's prophecy and the staged story that has just taken place in Mr Clay's house. At this point, Elishama is both Isaiah himself, he is Dinesen, and he is the Eternal Jew who, without desire of his own,[51] accounts for the aesthetic coherence of the tale, represented by his own person and spanning from a little red bag of inscriptions, kept by his heart in a string around his neck, to "det Kammer, hvis Dør han kunde lukke [the chamber whose door he could close]."[52]

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[50] Ibid., 124.

[51] Cf. note 37.

[52] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 155.

CHAPTER 3
DEFINING THE MYTH CONCEPT:
FRYE'S STRUCTURING VERSUS BLUMENBERG'S DISSOLVING

Before being able to determine whether my analyses take advantage of or benefit from the outlined theoretical approaches of Northrop Frye and Hans Blumenberg, it is necessary to survey their ideas and conceptual substance.

In the relation between artist and critic, Frye places himself in an interesting position by stating that "criticism is a structure of thought and knowledge existing in its own right, with some measure of independence from the art it deals with."[53] To Frye, the critic takes over where the poet leaves off, and his "structure of thought and knowledge"—that is, criticism—launches itself on the synoptic view that literature can be seen as "a complication of a relatively restricted and simple group of formulas that can be studied in primitive culture."[54] These formulas consist of *myths*, but in order to understand why and if they occur, why and if they signify a general pattern in literature and other forms of storytelling, one must grasp the idea and purpose of literature and storytelling altogether: what urges us to tell a story, or to write a tale about something? Why do we communicate by means of fiction, by relating made-up events or scenarios?

First of all, Frye founds his answers to these questions upon *ethics*: "There was a time when ethics could take the simple form of comparing what man does with what he ought to do, known as *the good*" (italics mine).[55] This statement involves the basic tendency already mentioned in my introduction; to tell stories about characters who can do anything—like myths of gods or legends of heroes[56]—but it also has to do with Aristotle's definition of

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[53] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 5.

[54] Ibid., 17.

[55] Ibid., 26.

[56] Cf. ibid., 51.

the word *mythos*. For, secondly, Frye builds up his *Anatomy of Criticism* around Aristotle's classical definitions of authentic art. Literature is essentially mimetic, striving for *catharsis*, and divided into "a 'high' form of epic and tragedy dealing with ruling-class figures, and a 'low' form confined to comedy and satire and more concerned with characters like ourselves."[57] Thus, Frye establishes a scheme of five "modes of fiction":

1) Myth
2) Romance
3) High mimetic mode
4) Low mimetic mode
5) Irony

Two points are noteworthy in relation to the focus of this thesis: Frye's description of poetry as an "imitation of an action"[58] and the fact that he admits the principle of "polysemous meaning."[59] Concerning the first point, Frye notes that "the poem is not natural in form, but it relates itself naturally to nature, and so … 'doth grow in effect a *second* nature'" (italics mine).[60] Aristotle identifies the imitation of action with *mythos* and thus, myth is related to reality in a problematic unification. Further, Frye emphasizes:

> The poem is not itself a mirror. It does not merely reproduce a shadow of nature; it causes nature to be reflected in its containing form.[61]

Not only does myth represent a *second* imitation of the reality it attempts to replicate and include in the work of art, it also casts a *third* aspect on that reality, namely a reflection of art's

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[57] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 65.

[58] Ibid., 83.

[59] Ibid., 72.

[60] Ibid., 82.

[61] Ibid., 84.

own, containing form—and "the work of art does not reflect eternal events and ideas, but exists between the example and the precept."[62]

The second point—that of polysemous meaning—is connected with the idea of unification through multiplicity which I mentioned in my introduction, but it also demonstrates Frye's eclecticism. The *Anatomy* may be based on the symbolism of the Bible and, to a lesser extent, on classical mythology, but Frye does not adhere to one single method and hence, his comprehensive view of criticism proves him to be a reformist of existing methods, rather than an inventor of new ones.[63] But let us return again to the myth/reality-problem, for Frye inserts a certain *displacement* of myths in the *Anatomy of Criticism*. He states that literary design places itself somewhere between myth and naturalism or realism, and the more it moves toward the latter category, the more it is displaced:

> The presence of a mythical structure in realistic fiction … poses certain technical problems for making it plausible, and the devices used in solving these problems may be given the general name of displacement.[64]

According to a mythical view of literature, the order of nature corresponds with an order of words and consequently, myth as an abstract story-pattern combined with a form of verbal art represents a forum dealing with the world that man creates, as Frye puts it in *Fables of Identity*.[65] However, mythical art *deals with* this world, it *is* not that world, and this is very important when reading for example Isak Dinesen's "Den Udødelige Historie." The world man lives in versus the world he *would like to* live in is therefore a dialectic constellation. The constituents of myth are analogy and identity, but in relation to a nature that has been

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[62] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 84.

[63] Cf. ibid., 344.

[64] Ibid., 136.

[65] Cf. Frye, Fables of Identity, 31.

assimilated to the human cycle of life as depicted in the artwork[66]: "Every fresh contact with 'life' involves also a *reshaping* of literary convention" (italics mine).[67] In "Den Udødelige Historie," the sailor myth is reshaped by the confrontation with life and also, by means of the attempted transformation from narrated to realized within the art form.

In Frye's theory, the mythical is seen as a movement toward abstraction, and the text's relation to reality is actually disregarded, as Jan Ulrik Dyrkjøb notes in *Northrop Fryes Litteraturteori*.[68] Moreover, Frye focuses on the quest-myth as a central theme in all literary interpretation, "as a definitive myth extending over time and space, over invisible and visible orders of reality, and with a parabolic dramatic structure of which the five acts are creation, fall, exile, redemption, and restoration."[69]

Frye uses the quest-myth to explain "the priority of myth to fact" which is "religious as well as literary,"[70] and he continues: "In both contexts the significance of the flood story is in its imaginative status as an archetype, a status which no layer of mud on top of Sumeria will ever account for."[71] Thus, Northrop Frye utilizes myth as a comprehension form, a totalitarian perception and explanation of the universe, of society, and of the single individual's role.[72] As Dyrkjøb outlines, Frye sees coherent mythology as the necessary foundation in every culture, and he wants to establish a corresponding coherence between religious myths and the structure of poetry. In Frye's view, the most important element of poetry is its metaphorical identification which is originally a mythical function. Metaphorical

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[66] Cf. Frye, Fables of Identity, 32.

[67] Ibid., 48.

[68] Cf. Dyrkjøb, 150.

[69] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 325.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Cf. Dyrkjøb, 95.

identification is defined as the conjunction of humanity and nature in the myth tale; it is the mythical, the metaphorical, and the primitive versus the realistic, the plausible, and the modern.

A general characteristic of the *Anatomy of Criticism* is its sharp division into sections—Frye thoroughly deals with historical perspectives, symbolic modes as a theoretical foundation, definitions of types of action, and definitions of literary genres. But Dyrkjøb criticizes the claimed universality of Frye's poetics, stating that his concept of the quest-myth—this idea of our tradition of imagination as centered around the loss and regaining of identity—is a limited critical scope which likewise offers a limited answer, not to all our expectations, but only a small number of them. It is Dyrkjøb's opinion that Frye describes, but does not explain the alterations of literary tendencies—the fact that modes combine across time-based chronology, or that they return in other periods of literary history. Frye operates an era-oriented theory, viewing periods as cultural *units*, instead of as a *unity* independent of time and space, and this is quite a contrast to his mythical coordinating scope.

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A very important point in Frye's displacement theory is his assertion that myth tales do not lose significance just because their religious relevance to society disappears; instead, they become displaced. This loss of religious relevance in modern storytelling is exactly what the German critic Hans Blumenberg deals with in *Arbeit am Mythos*, and he elaborates on his mythical outlook:

> Grenzbegriff der Arbeit am Mythos wäre, diesen ans Ende zu bringen, die äußerste Verformung zu wagen, die die genuine Figur gerade noch oder fast nicht mehr erkennen läßt.[73]
>
> [The ultimate idea of the work on myth was to end it [myth], to venture its most extreme deformation which the genuine figure only just or no longer recognizes.]

[73] Blumenberg, 295.

In order to entirely grasp Blumenberg's complex rhetoric and difficult phrasing, one must understand the basic, anthropological-sociological origin from which his theories spring. In his introduction to *Arbeit am Mythos*, Blumenberg builds up a description of man's development from "Fluchttiere [prey animal]"[74] to culturally aware human being. In a so-called "situation leap"—"ein Situationssprung"[75]—man's expectations of the distant, unexplored, and unknown horizon are combined with his intentional awareness. Through the act of *naming* the unclear becomes clear, and man moves from "Lebensangst [fear of life]" to "Lebenskunst [art of life]."[76]

Because *angst* is an irrational feeling, it must be rationalized into palpable *fear*, and rather than developing from experience and recognition, the process evolves from artifices—"durch das Erzählen von Geschichten [through the narrating of stories]."[77] Consequently, when "Lebensangst" ends, so does storytelling and myths and thus, Blumenberg claims that myths *are* no more: "Der Mythos sei dazu bestimmt, überwunden zu werden [Myth is destined to be overcome]."[78] Blumenberg's conclusion might seem a negative verdict over storytelling and imagery, particularly while he ends his *Arbeit am Mythos* by asking: "Weshalb sollte die Welt fortbestehen müssen, wenn nichts mehr zu sagen ist? [Why should the world continue to exist if there is no more to say?]"[79] But his final question leaves hope: "Wie aber, wenn doch noch etwas zu sagen wäre? [In what way, however, if there is still something to say?]"[80]

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[74] Blumenberg, 11.

[75] Ibid., 10.

[76] Ibid., 12 and 13.

[77] Ibid., 12.

[78] Ibid., 23.

[79] Ibid., 689.

[80] Ibid.

On the one hand, myth can no longer exist because "too little" is happening—"der Mythos kann nicht mehr stattfinden weil 'zu wenig' geschieht"[81]—but on the other hand, *mythos*, according to Blumenberg, has to do with naming the nameless, shaping the shapeless, and humanizing the bestial and hence, this Pantheon, or world of gods that is myth, has its root exactly in the origin and existence of mankind.[82]

* * *

When comparing the viewpoints of Northrop Frye and Hans Blumenberg, it becomes evident that they are representatives of opposite, critical tendencies in the context of literary history. Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* is written in the late 1950s with some relation to New Criticism, even though he does not explicitly declare either accordance with or opposition to the theoretical ideas of this movement.[83] However, it is clear that his belief in myth as an essential, overall pattern in literature is related to the "theories of absolutism" of the time—a systematization of the sciences which is brought to match the systems of the world.

Opposed to this idea is Blumenberg's "theories of relativity," and his *Arbeit am Mythos* is written after the ideological "landslide," if one is to regard Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* from 1973 as an epistemological milestone. Therefore, Frye might be a reformist of existing theories, but Blumenberg is the revisionist of criticism on myth, maintaining that myth itself has perished from literature of today, whereas aspects of mythology and a basic, mythological *desire* still exist in the text.

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[81] Blumenberg, 682.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Cf. for instance Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 81-82.

As a main outline of their comparison, though, I detect an interesting connection between Frye's displacement of myth and Blumenberg's mythical desire as the only remnant left. In the passage quoted earlier in this chapter, Frye admits the difficulty of implementing a mythical structure in realistic fiction and thus, he restricts his overall myth pattern to what could be seen as a similarity to the ideas of Blumenberg. In addition, Frye states that "myth operates at the top level of human desire" which "does not mean that it necessarily presents its world as attained or attainable by human beings"[84]—does this statement imply that Frye's myth, too, is nothing but a subconscious desire in man, an unattainable structure of imagery, apocalyptic and metaphorical? Another springboard for comparison between the two critics is Frye's five modes of fiction, for perhaps Blumenberg would agree with their significance if seen as an exclusively chronological categorization without spatial dimensions. In that way, myth represents the earliest mode and irony the latest which is then perceived as the predominant fictional representation, we encounter today.

Furthermore, Frye and Blumenberg can both be said to adhere to Aristotle's aesthetic definitions, according to which *mythos* signifies the narrative plot. But in Frye's view, this plot is essential in all texts whereas to Blumenberg, it represents a distant "heritage" forming only a background of literature. It is also possible to view Frye's quest-myth as a foundation for both his and Blumenberg's theoretical "agenda," but it involves more extensive consequences for the former than for the latter and therefore, the introductory question whether Frye is a determinist must be answered with a "yes." However, he is not a determinist in the same sense as the critics he describes, for instance Jung who is merely "putting his favorite study into a causal relationship with whatever interests him less."[85] Frye's own "favorite study" is to find a conceptual framework for criticism within literature, not to "attach criticism to one of a miscellany of frameworks outside it."[86]

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[84] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 136.

[85] Ibid., 6.

[86] Cf. note 29.

Therefore, Frye believes that *his* criticism "grow[s] out of the art it deals with,"[87] and he does not utilize an extra-literary scheme. But nevertheless, his intra-literary sources for criticism can be characterized as deterministic because the mythical view represents an *absolute* which—according to Frye—has hitherto formed all literary convention. Perhaps we must reconsider Frye's mythical principle and limit its representation to "one extreme of literary design."[88] The main point for Frye, however, is that myth *is there*, in *all* literature, at *all* times.

I would like to problematize whether the storytellers of my focus—Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg—can be said to "belong" to the one or the other theoretical view, and I will keep the two critics *in mente* during my analyses, but further critical introduction, dealing specifically with characteristics of the three writers, might bring their artistry closer to elements of Frye's or Blumenberg's critical ideas.

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The Dinesen-critic Robert Langbaum emphasizes that in her tales, "life is to be understood on the analogy of art in which everything, even the pain and the evil, is essentially necessary."[89] Dinesen's justification of art is irrational and almost religious in its blind devotion; the characters of her stories must learn to play their given roles and to love their destiny, but not necessarily to understand what is happening to them and why. Therefore, even lies can be true in the tales because the goals of the characters differ from those of God or the artwork. Often times, Dinesen's stories are themselves the solution to the problems they pose. Thus, in "Den Udødelige Historie," the futility of rendering myth into reality is realized during the very process of attempting to live out that myth. In general,

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[87] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 6.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Langbaum, 12.

many of Dinesen's tales are about "artists-in-life," or people who attempt to play God and repeat his act of creation:

> When he finds that the events he set in motion have got out of hand, that miraculously he has stepped from his own story into God's, then he has arrived at absolute knowledge.[90]

But where do these observations take us in terms of Frye's structuring of myth or Blumenberg's dissolving of the mythical concept and pattern? In my view, Dinesen perceives myth, first of all, as something essential in man, namely his fate which is determined by an eternal longing for God, for becoming what God is, and for creating what God creates. But secondly, this fate of man implies the very impossibility of being God and thus, of obtaining the myth. Life may be analogous to art, and art may be the divine accomplishment of mankind, but in man's re-creation of myths in life, the result becomes his absolute recognition of inadequacy—his lack of power to control the events fully and completely. Subsequently, he himself must submit to larger forces: those of myth and nature, those of God. Thus, on the one hand, it is possible to interpret Dinesen's myth as an underlying pattern permeating art and the actions of man, but on the other hand, that myth is altered, if not dissolved—or displaced!—in the meeting with life in the artwork. Dinesen's stories *are* not themselves myths, they merely *relate* events in which myths are tentatively, but unsuccessfully incorporated into the reality of her characters and therefore, her tales suggest the *failure* of myth as a destiny pattern in human existence. This is how I interpret Dinesen's explicit *Modernism* in Langbaum's emphasis.

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In Agnete Dorph Christoffersen's newspaper review of Peter Høeg's *Fortællinger om natten*, she characterizes his stories as "a posthumous publication of Dinesen," resembling

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[90] Langbaum, 24.

her pathos and experiments with the fantastic genre.[91] Like his Danish predecessor, Høeg employs masks and mirrors in his unveiling of the characters, their destinies, and the nightside of consciousness. Moreover, he deals with aspects of morality, guilt, religion, and love, and his stories also relate to an *artistic*, interpretative context, raising universal questions of justice—is misery the only way to insight? But *Fortællinger om natten* is not merely an imitation of Dinesen's style and narrative. For instance, I see a clear contrast between the individual's general exceeding of conventions in Høeg versus Dinesen's destiny-controlled limitations of individuality. Both share a classic definition of the story, however, seeing it as a necessary means of polemicizing the artistic theme by exposing a close connection between love, art, and death, and by revealing an essential *doubt* in the narrator who is changed by his own narration! Comparing this artifice to the theory, I detect a parallel between a narrative changed by its own narration and the change of *myth* through its own appearance in the textual reality—are we, again, approaching the gray zone of Frye's displacement and Blumenberg's desire?

In the *Information*-review of *Fortællinger om natten*, Søren Schou pairs Høeg's writings with Dinesen's paradigm "to know the truth about a man by his mask."[92] But although it is often via a spiritual experience that the inner self is explored and cognition is obtained, it is important to emphasize that the unconscious does not interest a modern writer like Peter Høeg, as Erik Svendsen remarks.[93] This is interesting in terms of a comparison to myth elements in Ernest Hemingway, for he, too, focuses on man's spirituality and—as the Hemingway-critic Jackson J. Benson observes—particularly in relation to the timeless, mythical associations which can be said to date back to man's earliest, archetypal experiences

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[91] Cf. Agnete Dorph Christoffersen, review of Fortællinger om natten, by Peter Høeg, in Kristeligt Dagblad (21 November 1990).

[92] Cf. Søren Schou, review of Fortællinger om natten, by Peter Høeg, in Information (28 September 1990).

[93] Cf. Svendsen, 14.

with nature.[94] However, finishing the critical commentary on Peter Høeg's *Fortællinger om natten*, Ide Hejlskov Larsen launches an important division of Høeg's stories into three different views on life:

1) A unifying view (romantic)
2) A contradictory view (opposite characters)
3) A separated view (fragments of understanding)[95]

The comparison between Hejlskov Larsen's three-step categorization and Frye's quest-myth scheme represents a curious experiment. Subsequently, perceiving the views chronologically, we confront the unifying view as a characteristic for ancient myths and legends, the contradictory view which dominates Romantic literature, and the separated view as the expressive forum for Modernism.

Does this interpretation bring us any closer to a definition of the myth concept in the three writers and the outlined theory? Another experiment could be to read Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg as representatives of one view each. However, I will keep these views in mind throughout my analysis chapter, since they might add useful perspectives to my intertextual studies.

* * *

Focusing now on a critical characterization of Hemingway's short stories, it might seem difficult immediately to spot the similarities between his compressed images, or minimalist narrative technique, and the ornamented, layered, "old-fashioned" narration of Isak Dinesen, or Peter Høeg's explicit and articulated style, his sense of detail and bold, specific *mimesis* of various literary genres. Hemingway seems to have a lot less time as a narrator, he uses no superfluous words, no unnecessary adjectives, and his perfect symbols

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[94] Cf. Jackson J. Benson, The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essays (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1975), 286-287.

[95] Cf. Ide Hejlskov Larsen, "Høegs uforsvarlige fortællere," Kritik 30, no. 128 (1997): 49-57.

fall as natural objects in the text, as Joseph M. Flora notes.[96] Further, journalism is an important base for Hemingway, and his chief subject is *himself*, or someone's self.

Hemingway's influence by Ezra Pound—echoed in his statement that "an image … is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time"[97]—could be suggesting an affiliation with Blumenberg's belief in the victory of *Logos* over *Mythos*: "Den Mythos zu Ende zu bringen, das soll einmal die Arbeit des Logos gewesen sein [to end myth, that should have been the work of Logos]."[98] But this notion is negated by Flora's assertion that Hemingway wanted his readers to look at his works as expressions of "*significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet."[99] This emotional life of the poem adheres to Frye's underlying principle of myth, rather than to Blumenberg's distant mythical echo.

In his essay "The Art of the Short Story," Hemingway stresses the importance of throwing away reality and inventing fiction from what one *knows*. Thus, his themes cover such diverse aspects as the individual's striving for independence, father/son relations, (the loss of) love, war and death, birth and aging, the loss of traditional values in the Western world, the writing process, the masculine and the feminine.[100] Many of these themes Hemingway has in common with Dinesen and Høeg, and although the former's narrative voice is not as "present" as in the latter two writers, Hemingway's textual message is not only an emotional testimony of various representations of humanity, it is also of artistic relevance.

Misery is indeed the Heming-way to insight in his short stories, and Christian symbolism plays an important role in some of his tales. Compare for example the Christ-like

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[96] Joseph M. Flora, Ernest Hemingway: A Study of the Short Fiction (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 4.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Blumenberg, 681.

[99] Flora, 19.

[100] Cf. ibid., 133.

idolization of the boxer Steve Ketchell in "The Light of the World." Also, masks occur as a natural part of Hemingway's plots. They are not as fictitiously staged as in Dinesen and Høeg, but function more as instruments toward the change of and escapism from identity, existence, and reality.

* * *

Astradur Eysteinsson's theories lend an interesting aspect to our myth/reality focus, and I read him as a somewhat mediating factor between Frye's and Blumenberg's outlooks. In *The Concept of Modernism* from 1990, Eysteinsson examines the collaboration between paradigmatic conceptions of Modernism and historical reality, using "tradition" as a semantic base.[101] Eysteinsson defines the principal characteristic of Modernism as a rage against prevalent traditions that are undermining its authority. He then deals with T. S. Eliot's famous essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" where Eliot emphasizes myth as "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[102] Eysteinsson also talks of Modernism as the catalyst for an aesthetic heroism, a fallen world in which art is the only dependable principle and thus, of "quasi-religious kind"—"the unity of art is supposedly a salvation."[103] This is very similar to Robert Langbaum's descriptions of the central myth in Romantic literature,[104] and Eysteinsson explains his theory of art in Modernism:

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[101] Cf. Astradur Eysteinsson, The Concept of Modernism (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 8.

[102] Ibid., 9.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Cf. note 8 and 9.

> This organic theory of art, derived partly from classical, partly from romanticist aesthetics, is echoed in different ways in a great number of works on modernism—very often through a reference to Eliot's essay or Joyce's novel—and is frequently taken to constitute the center of the revolutionary formal awareness and emphasis that most critics detect in modernist works.[105]

Several concepts are at stake in the passage. First of all, it is noteworthy that *history* plays an important role in Eysteinsson's myth/reality-discrepancy. Secondly, an interesting observation is the fact that Eysteinsson describes Modernist aesthetics the same way as Langbaum describes that of Romantic literature, even though the former is aiming for a definition of the concept of Modernism, whereas the latter is hinting at the significance of *myth*. Thirdly, the formal awareness and focus on "form as an autonomous vehicle of aesthetic significance"[106] also functions as the "missing link" between Frye's and Blumenberg's diverging points.

Concerning the first point, Eysteinsson's encircling of the concept of Modernism is based on the historical development of aesthetic awareness. So are the theories of Frye and Blumenberg, at least to a certain extent, but these two critics are not looking for an historical period which can be said to be the *result* of preceding events and tendencies. Instead, they are interested in a mythical structuring pattern and order—or the lack thereof!—as a main constituent throughout all historical and aesthetic periods of literature. Regarding the second point, Eysteinsson's perception of Modernism as a salvation era in terms of its art could be seen as a revision of Frye's ideas on myth. It points toward the identity between myth and modernity because Modernism is at a stage of dissolution and emancipation from previous literary times and "rules" and therefore, open to "something stricter," namely "myth as a structuring device"[107] and a means of salvation from total, modern chaos. As for the third point, one must keep in mind that even though Eysteinsson's modernism leans toward

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[105] Eysteinsson, 10.

[106] Ibid., 11.

[107] Ibid., 9 and 10.

traditions and myths, it rejects a traditional *social* representation, weighing instead a *formal* awareness. Form as a textual autonomy in the poem is a standard perception of New Criticism, but Eysteinsson states that Modernist literature, of course, has ties with society, reality, and history.[108] What is noticeable, though, is that modernity's "salvation from and transcendence of reality"[109] falls *outside* of history which is closer to Blumenberg's theoretical definitions than to Frye's. For this Modernist idea of a fallen world is an offspring of romantic and mythical views—forming their antithesis—and hence, Blumenberg's notion of myth as a mere background and desire for modern literature holds good. Thus, Eysteinsson concludes his train of thought by quoting Robert Onopa:

> Once outside of history the work is available as a paradigm of paradise, the antithesis of the fallen world, and, as a product of man, a means for him to transcend the fallen, time-bound world.[110]

"A paradigm of paradise," "the antithesis of the fallen world," and "a product of man" are all Blumenberg-esque terms, but I definitely see Eysteinsson as an intermediary between Frye and Blumenberg, inserting the structuring powers of myth into modern literature which, in turn, produces a synthesis of the mythical concept.

Let me now commence my analyses and see if the myriad of hypotheses I have forwarded in this chapter will be explained by means of the following parts of my thesis.

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[108] Eysteinsson, 11.

[109] Ibid., 12.

[110] Ibid., 13.

CHAPTER 4
COMPARATIVE DIMENSIONS:
TALES OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

Keeping in mind the theoretical myth/reality-discrepancy, a relevant presentation of Isak Dinesen's stories is Robert Langbaum's remark that she writes within "the tradition that presents the story as story rather than as an imitation of reality."[111] Thus, following in the narrative footsteps of Ovid, Cervantes, and *Thousand and One Nights*, Dinesen constitutes her style in the *self-awareness* of her storytelling. This theme is as crucial in "Dykkeren" as the staging of myth in "Den Udødelige Historie," the focus of my pilot analysis in the second chapter.

However, apart from these two thematic constituents—which I perceive as applicable to the tales by Ernest Hemingway and Peter Høeg as well—I would like to establish further four categories, in order to structure my interpretative material and prevent mere, aimless cataloging of observations throughout my readings. These four ideas read as follows:

1) Several persons gathered; taking stock of their lives
2) Certain events or actions radically change the course of the story
3) Transformation of characters
4) The wish of the characters to change their fate; or the change of their fate beyond their control

The first category is constructed upon a narrative artifice which I have encountered in several tales by all three writers. By gathering the protagonists in a more or less accidental situation, the artifice underlines the trick of *destiny* in the tales. I have shaped the second category around the use of *irony* which I see as the result of a radical change in the course of the stories, as a means of manifesting the roles and limitations of the characters. The third category is based on my observation of metamorphoses or *metempsychoses* in several tales,

[111] Langbaum, 24.

leading to a narrative demonstration of the necessity of knowing both sides of humanity, good as well as evil. As for my fourth category, it is designed to reveal the inner *doubt* of the protagonists in the stories, showing their existential struggle and attempt to change their destiny, before accepting their pre-ordained role.

Commencing with Dinesen's "Dykkeren" and the concept of narrative self-awareness, stories are told "for at gøre Verden lykkeligere og visere [to make the world happier and wiser]," as the professional storyteller Mira Jama introduces the tale.[112] Like "Den Udødelige Historie," this tale is about the telling of a story versus the realization of it. Therefore, the narrative starting point of "Dykkeren" is its self-manifestation as a story: "Mira Jama fortalte denne Historie [Mira Jama narrated this story]."[113]

The young student Saufe's goal is to get in touch with the angels, and he believes this to be possible since "Gud skaber ikke en Længsel uden at have en opfyldende Virkelighed paa rede Haand [God does not create any longing without having fulfilling reality at hand]."[114] Through contact with the angels, Saufe wants to understand the eternal pattern of life—"Livets evige Mønster"[115]—but it is not by means of flying that he, eventually, comprehends his life's scheme. On the contrary, it is at the bottom of the sea that Saufe learns his destiny. When he realizes that the dancer Thusmu is not an angel, he loses all hope and thus, "falls" ideologically. Later on, Saufe encounters an existence of happiness and harmony, diving for pearls in the ocean. But a happy life in reality does not generate great stories in fiction—for "Digterens Frembringelser … er Sygdom forvandlede til Skønhed [the work of the artist is illness transformed into beauty]," as Mira Jama states.[116]

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[112] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 18.

[113] Ibid., 9.

[114] Ibid., 11.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid., 18.

Here, we are indeed touching upon the central problem of myth tales and their realization in life. Stories may be told to make the world happier and wiser, but this goal is not achieved through the narration of happy lives—the beautiful tale emerges from misery, loss, and tragedy. Furthermore, Mira Jama explains that "det er en forfærdelig Oplevelse for en Fortæller at erfare, at hans Historie er sand [it is a horrifying experience for a narrator to realize that his story is true]."[117] This remark leads to the perception that stories should not be "dethroned" from their superior stage of significance to the level of reality. Their purpose is to remain in a higher sphere of illusion and beauty, thus generating and paralleling real-life aspirations and dreams. However, an interesting narrative structure is the division of "Dykkeren" into two parts: the first part represents the sad story about a young man who loses all hope and his belief in spiritual beauty; the second part is the "real" moral of the story and of a meta-narrative kind, about what constitutes stories, how they occur, and which ones are fit for telling.

Robert Langbaum notes that the tale "is about the human world of disequilibrium, where innocence is lost and aspiration exceeds realization,"[118] and comparing this statement to the prophetic trunk fish's proclamations in "Dykkeren," we see the manifestation and explanation of the tale's view on both storytelling and the human existence, expressed in and symbolized by the first and second part, respectively. In Mira Jama's first story, Saufe loses his innocence when his naive belief in angels is destroyed. His own aspirations to become an angel are indeed exceeding what is feasible and thereby, he "falls"—in his own eyes, in society's, and in God's. His own expectations are disappointed, he is made a fool of in town, and he disappoints God because of his attempt to become like him, a creator and unearthly being.

In the beginning of the second part of "Dykkeren," Saufe is now "Elnazred" which supposedly means "the happy man," but is also an anagram for Andrézel, one of Isak

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[117] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 18.

[118] Langbaum, 247.

Dinesen's pseudonyms—I will return to the significance of this name in a little while. The happy man remarks to Mira Jama that Saufe's life was probably *made* for stories since he was a tragic being, whereas he is different now, as Elnazred. He warns his companion that, although not a storyteller, the story he intends to pass on to Mira Jama might destroy the young poet's hope, and without hope, one cannot tell a story—"uden Haab kan man ikke fortælle."[119]

Thus, he prepares Mira Jama—and the reader—for the doctrines of the trunk fish which are also the main points of the story and represent, quite surprisingly in my view, the complete opposite of mythical dreams, transcendence, and hope. According to the fish, man's fate is determined by his element; he walks on the surface, moves at one level only and thus, is capable of falling. Fish, on the other hand, move in all directions and dimensions, they cannot fall—"thi hvorledes eller hvorhen skulde vi vel falde [for how or where would we fall to]?"[120]—and because they have no arms, they "fristes aldrig til at ændre noget Forhold i det fuldbragte og bestaaende Skaberværk [are never tempted to change any condition in the accomplished and existing world of creation]."[121] Moreover, fish are able to see the eternal pattern of the universe which is obvious to them, as they view it from below.

Hence, the trunk fish clarifies to Elnazred how fish live in total balance at all times, and how their constant well-being is based on their independence from *hope* and *risks*. While Thusmu could not dance without hope, and Mira Jama cannot tell stories without it, it is perfectly possible to swim and dive without hope—and even fairly likely "at man i Virkeligheden holder sig i sundest Ligevægt uden Haab [that, in fact, one's equilibrium remains in the healthiest balance without hope]."[122]

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[119] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 22.

[120] Ibid., 25.

[121] Ibid., 24-25.

[122] Ibid., 27.

Consequently, fish rest in themselves, neither happy nor unhappy, without hope, but also without illusions, and the trunk fish describes how "vort Element har overtaget vor egen Væren [our element has taken over our own being],"[123] meaning that fish have totally understood and accepted their destiny:

> Mennesket foruroliges, til syvende og sidst, af hvad han kalder Tiden og bringes ud af Ligevægt ved at flakke mellem Fortid og Fremtid. Beboerne af en flydende Verden har planmæssigt forenet de to Begreber og ladet dem flyde sammen i Maximen: "Efter os kommer Syndfloden."[124]
>
> [Man is disquieted, when all is said and done, by what he calls time and is thrown off his balance by roaming about between past and present. The inhabitants of a liquid world have systematically united the two concepts and let them merge in the maxim: "After us comes the Flood."]

This ending signifies an extreme here-and-now philosophy, suggesting the aimless existence of the fish as an ideal and desirable condition in life which humans ought to learn from and adopt, but the question arises whether Dinesen is being deeply sarcastic by finishing "Dykkeren" this way. I detect an ironic mode in the funny description of the trunk fish, for instance her horn-rimmed glasses and the fact that she is a *trunk* fish! Also, the remark about her "salty" nieces—whom Elnazred, under different circumstances, might have been interested in!—seems to me an amusing aspect of the story's ironic point. But if Dinesen is caricaturing her figures and letting a tragic first part transform into a light and funny second part, what *is*, then, the moral of "Dykkeren"? The answer is to be sought in the comments on storytelling in the tale, and let me now return to Elnazred as Andrézel, or Dinesen's *alter ego*. If the Andrézel-anagram means "the happy man," then Dinesen identifies herself with Saufe/Elnazred, an ideological dreamer who has lost his hopes and beliefs and settled in an emotionless, but harmonic existence by and in the balanced element of the sea.

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[123] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 26.

[124] Ibid., 27.

However, viewing Dinesen as a hopeless, but happy storyteller is a complex constellation, and it involves most of the key sentences in "Dykkeren." On the one hand, it is problematic to see the "happy" and balanced Dinesen as an unpretentious narrator without hope—because "without hope, one cannot tell a story," as quoted earlier in this chapter[125]—and also, to place her as the creator of a story whose constituent is supposed to be "illness transformed into beauty," also as mentioned previously.[126] On the other hand, it is not difficult to perceive the trunk fish and its proclamations as analogous to the art of Dinesen, representing a true marionette of God who has understood the purpose of being. But, after all, I find it a little hard to unite the lack of hope and risks in the universe of the fish with storytelling which is meant to "make the world happier and wiser."[127]

It is possible to compare Elnazred of "Dykkeren" to Elishama in "Den Udødelige Historie," because both characters represent beings who have become one with the artistic feeling and the intention of God. This interesting perspective is also to be found in Langbaum's comments, particularly when he describes "how for human beings the mystical 'soaring' is achieved by a movement downward and backward to the finite," as he phrases it.[128] By opposing "the fluid world of biology and spirit and the rationalist dry land,"[129] Dinesen expresses a movement back to eternal values which is both floating and downward. These eternal values, together with "the finite," are characterized by the flood theme and signify the universal principle of artistic unity with the intention of God. But I interpret the closing doctrine of the trunk fish—that after the fish have perished, the flood will come—in two ways: either as their recognition that past and present does not matter, come what may

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[125] Cf. note 119.

[126] Cf. note 116.

[127] Cf. note 112.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Langbaum, 247.

after their careless existence; or as a complex realization that their hope-less and risk-less life will somehow lead to God's purification of the world, in order to maintain the balance of good and evil, right and wrong, happiness and sorrow.…

Thus, the ending of "Dykkeren" is very open and "loose," as Erik Svendsen remarks,[130] and it can be read to the advantage of the trunk fish maxims, or as their complete opposition. For on the one hand, the fish can be said to exist in accordance with the intention of God, corresponding to Hans Holmberg's characterization of Dinesen's value-absolutism—that in her pre-destined narrative world, there is one right action for every situation, and this action is confirmed by harmony.[131] But on the other hand—and relating to Langbaum's description of the myth of the fall in Dinesen[132]—the fall has separated man's self-consciousness from God's will and consequently, the philosophy of the fish could be suggesting that their marionette behavior, aimless "floating along," and complete *lack* of self-awareness versus Saufe's aggressive self-consciousness in the beginning of "Dykkeren" somehow *must* result in a narrative, cognitive culmination, a "flood of purification" of either extreme, in order to unite the discrepancies: man's self-awareness and God's will.

* * *

Continuing now with further analysis and the first of my categories—the theme consisting of a number of people brought together by accident or purposely, evaluating their lives and telling each other stories about themselves—both Dinesen's "Syndfloden over Norderney," Høeg's "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte," and Hemingway's "The Light of the World" are founded upon this thematic structure.

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[130] Cf. note 15.

[131] Cf. Holmberg, 108.

[132] Cf. Langbaum, 50-52.

Keeping in touch with "Dykkeren"'s flood theme, "Syndfloden over Norderney" is a tale about a group of people belonging to the old, European aristocracy who are brought together by a flood. They spend a fatal night together in a hay loft, waiting for the rescue boats, or rather, waiting for death:

> Som om de havde været fire Marionetter, der blev styret af samme Snor, vendte de fire i Høloftet sig mod hverandre.… Hvordan er mon disse Mennesker at dø sammen med?[133]
>
> [As if they had been four marionettes controlled by the same string, the four in the hay loft turned toward each other.… What would it be like to die with these people?]

Dinesen inserts a certain ironic mode right from the beginning of the story. Not only are the four aristocrats physically isolated from the rest of society in the loft, they also represent a dying class whose virtues are exposed as decadent, ridiculous, and barren. Compare for instance the melancholy of young Jonathan Mærsk, Miss Calypso's silly imagination that she is a magnificent sea goddess when she is actually in great danger due to the flood, or the disturbed Miss Malin who is an old maid, but believes herself to be very sinful.[134]

Irony also permeates the events that night, for during these dark hours, the four persons live more intensely than they have ever lived their entire lives. Jonathan and Calypso go through a marriage ceremony, conducted by the cardinal and Miss Malin. The older couple also experience a brief moment of passion—they kiss—and "saaledes gik den gamle, stolte Jomfru ikke ukysset i sin Grav [thus, the old, proud maid did not meet her death unkissed]."[135] Jonathan Mærsk tells his story, Miss Malin tells Calypso's and thereby, her own. When the cardinal tells his, his initial prophecy comes true which was this:

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[133] Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 147.

[134] Cf. ibid., 145.

[135] Ibid., 205.

> Har ikke Herren her skænket os en Dommedag en miniature? Det er næsten Midnat. Lad dette da være den Time, hvori Masken falder,—og kan det ikke blive Deres eller min Maske, som falder, lad det da blive Skæbnens og Livets Maske.[136]
>
> [Has not the Lord granted us Apocalypse *en miniature*? It is almost midnight. Let this, then, be the hour of masks to fall,—and if it cannot be yours or mine, let it, then, be the mask of destiny and of life.]

It does indeed turn out to be the hour during which the masks of both the cardinal, life, and destiny are revealed, and all three revelations are presented as aspects of the cardinal. He turns out to be Kasparsen, the cardinal's valet and slayer who has become one with destiny, eternity, and God's own soul.[137] The reason why I see Kasparsen as a representative of life and destiny *per se* is because of his point toward the end of "Syndfloden over Norderney"; that to laugh right back when the devil laughs at us is the truest art form worth learning.

Consequently, the extreme lives of the four people in the hay loft—but particularly of the cardinal and Miss Malin—have been lived out even more extremely in their fantasy throughout one night, and during this time span, I see a movement toward purification. The young ones are sleeping innocently in the corner, and the old couple "enter the sky" as they kiss—compare Miss Malin's outcry: "Montez au ciel"[138]—thus reaching a paradise-like stage of fulfillment before the *snake* of water interrupts them and reminds them of the end. And the ending describes, once again, the self-awareness in Dinesen's stories. It consists of a quote from *Thousand and One Nights* where Scheherazade, seeing the break of dawn, concludes her tale.

As Robert Langbaum notes, the four aristocrats in the hay loft represent "the voice of memory,"[139] but the mask theme is remarkable because it is constructed upon a

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[136] Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 159.

[137] Cf. ibid., 201.

[138] Ibid., 204.

[139] Langbaum, 76.

conflict between cultural, individual, and artistic identities. "Cultural memory has been almost lost,"[140] but it is still possible for Jonathan Mærsk, Miss Calypso, Miss Malin, and the cardinal/Kasparsen to "salvage their *humanity*, which might be defined as precisely those values that can be salvaged after the whole of *the past* has been negated" (italics mine).[141] Thus, the masks have been revealed and the past swept away by the flood, through an ironic set-up of four doomed destinies in a hay loft, who have led beautiful lives and told fantastic stories, but whose existence, from now on, is illusory.

Peter Høeg's "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte" is structured similarly to "Syndfloden over Norderney"—in both cases, four people are gathered in what could be their final night before an eternal "heart of darkness," to make obvious Høeg's mimetic parallel to Conrad's title. In both tales, stories appear within the story, and we are confronted with extreme characters whose existence is mainly alive in their fantasy and ideological imagination. A significant difference from the Dinesen-text, however, is Høeg's use of suspension and crime thriller elements as a part of his modern myth-making. For example, I see this artifice in David's discovery of the replacement of the waiter in the train:

> En ny flaske blev bragt ind, og den blev bragt øjeblikkelig og lydløst som man kunne forvente, og kun David bemærkede, at den tjener der bragte den, ikke var den samme som før, og at han bar en uniform der var alt, alt for lille til ham, og at han bar flasken med halsen nedad.[142]
>
> [A new bottle was brought in, and it was brought immediately and silently as one could expect, and only David noticed that the waiter who brought it was not the same as before, and that he wore a uniform way too small for him, and that he carried the bottle neck downward.]

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[140] Langbaum, 76.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Peter Høeg, Fortællinger om natten (København: Munksgaard Rosinante, 1990), 28.

Hence, Høeg's story becomes a *forum* for the moral or the point, implementing various tools in order to obtain different levels of expression, whereas Dinesen's tales are *themselves* the moral point, as Erik Svendsen observes.[143] But despite modern suspension instead of a traditional, dramatic situation, the main frame of "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte" is the same as in "Syndfloden over Norderney." Joseph K., General von Lettow Voerbeck, and the narrator in third-person, David Rehn, are gathered in a train from Cabinda to Katanga in Africa, on March 18, 1929. The narrative starting point for the story is therefore of an historical origin, but the conflicts arising in the plot are of a universal, archetypal kind.

As it turns out, the train has been hijacked by an African guerrilla group who intends to derail it which means, of course, the three men's certain death. Their intellectual discussion about truth prior to this news—which is given to them by Lueni, the female guerrilla leader who is in the train with them—suddenly seems hollow and contrived when viewed in the light of the truest truths of all: death.

After the awareness of death has entered the minds of the characters, it becomes clear that truth is a diffuse concept, and that each of the men fights for his own idea of the truthful. Joseph K.'s truth is rather Dinesen-esque; throughout the conversation, his arguments have been directed toward the knowledge of being at the bottom, of living on one's knees, and of realizing that it is impossible to "sink any lower." David, on the other hand, has been driven by mathematical principles and rationality as true doctrines—"alligevel er jeg her, fordi jeg har forladt matematikken [still, I am here because I have left mathematics]."[144] Instead, David dreams of the great simplicity—"den store enkelhed"[145]—as the potential and ultimate characterization of man, and the attempt to reach God. General von Lettow's truth consists of (military) pride and courage whereas the African rebellion,

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[143] Svendsen, 15.

[144] Høeg, 35.

[145] Ibid.

Lueni, perceives *her* truth as (political) justice toward her fellow countrymen. But in my view, the whole point of "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte" is that the heart of darkness—toward which the train is headed—represents the *lack* of an answer to what truth *really* is. Or, as mentioned, it reveals truth as *death*, the only certainty in the life of man.

The fact that the four people manage to get off the train before its inevitable crash symbolizes, to me, the survival of each of the person's truths. It is therefore interesting to perceive "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte" as a story uniting *multiple* figures and meanings into *one*, universal and archetypal myth principle, namely man's attitude toward life and death. The multiplicity is obvious, for example in the names and occupations of the four characters. The three biblical names of David, Joseph, and Paul not only signify a symbolic meeting between diverging religious and fundamental ideas; David's conversation with the two older men is also associated with David's fight against Goliath which, in this case, consists of truth and honesty versus falsehood and deception.

Moreover, Joseph K. suggests an affiliation with Kafka's figure and thus, with absurdity as an aspect of his truth, in contrast to David's quest for meaningfulness and the general's wish for justice. Hence, the mathematician, the humanist/artist, the fighter/strategist, and the black rebel/savage are gathered in an archetypal confrontation between science and art, righteousness and injustice, Europe and Africa—but also between *Logos* and *Mythos* which is word and meaning in a semantic context. And by the end of "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte," the latter conquers the former, by means of the name and actions of Lueni:

> Mit navn betyder krig på mit eget sprog.[146]
>
> [My name means war in my own language.]

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[146] Høeg, 43.

The African guerrilla leader incarnates meaning and symbol more than words and thought which she leaves to the three men during their conversation in the train where she is a passive observer. Now, eventually, she gets the last "word" which is the African spirit taking passionate action against ancient Europe's intellectual, but depraved ideas of truth.

In Ernest Hemingway's "The Light of the World" the plot is different from the two other stories, but the constellation of characters is the same. Although more than four people are brought together in the station's waiting room, and although they are not there because of some fatal event, but merely to wait for the train, they wind up relating stories to each other and expressing their feelings and ideas on subjects such as truth and lies. It is a very heterogeneous group of people that are sitting in the station. The first-person character—presumably Nick Adams—and his friend, Tom, enter this small-town *agora* populated with monstrous whores, rednecks, Indians, and a gay cook! From the beginning of the story, the atmosphere is very unpleasant and saturated with bad attitudes and people who are being mean to each other. This jargon is in sharp contrast to the whiteness of the gay cook's hands and the nice voice and face of the biggest whore, Alice. In general, the conversations and descriptions in "The Light of the World" are build up around opposites such as light and darkness, truths and lies, good and bad, stories and memories. Alice, with her pretty voice and face, and the gay cook, with his white hands and decent manner of speaking, both represent the very antithesis to the peroxide blonde who is "a regular little spitfire,"[147] the other whores who are not very *bright*, and the redneck with the mocking and unfriendly comments.

The Christ-figure plays a certain role in the story which can almost be seen as a parable with a religious moral, essentially questioning the true or untrue narration of Peroxide's relationship with the boxer, Steve Ketchell. Her description of the boxer's purity and decency raises him to a position as a "savior" in the eyes of the people at the station, a

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[147] Ernest Hemingway, The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway—Finga Vigía Edition, ed. John, Patrick, and Gregory Hemingway (New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1987), 294.

beautiful memory to which they can cling, in order to escape from their own miserable lives. For a moment, they all become Christ's/Ketchell's bereaved disciples, shining in the light that Peroxide's story casts, until Alice rejects it as a lie and proves herself to be the real "light of the world," the only one among these persons in the station who possesses an inner illumination, due to her honesty and sincerity. One might argue that the cook symbolizes as "pure" a being as Alice—or even as Christ!—because he is depicted in a positive manner throughout the story. Also, the observations on his whiteness and cleanliness are parallel to Peroxide's story about Ketchell:

> [He] was the finest and most beautiful man that ever lived. I never saw a man as clean and as white.[148]

However, it is my opinion that, after all, neither Alice nor the cook represent "the light" of their world. More likely, it is their talk and the emotions they express that signify the truth, illumination, and purification in a rough and vulgar world where cultivated, "aristocratic" virtues have been lost. Even the cook cannot escape from his potential, homosexual desire for the two young boys, and Alice may be "a lovely piece,"[149] but as the critic Paul Smith remarks, it is not enough to be just a lovely piece when love itself is the "light."[150] Thus, Smith argues that the real point of "The Light of the World" is the principal character's/Nick's education in the language of the world, his learning of communication in relation to—or in opposition to!—his dreams, ideals, and beliefs.[151]

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[148] Hemingway, 295.

[149] Ibid., 296.

[150] Cf. Paul Smith, A Reader's Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1989), 26.

[151] Cf. ibid.

In this context, Peroxide's final comment—"leave me with my memories … with my true and beautiful memories"[152]—revealing her general perception of truths and lies, stories and reality, is interesting because it suggests the ugliness and pity of untrue stories, in contrast to Alice's presumable truths which make *her* a beautiful person, behind her "mask" of obesity and prostitution. But eventually, the meanness, the lies, and the hard masks of impertinence overshadow beautiful stories and honest memories—thus, Nick Adams's experience of "the light of the world" is more like a short flicker of illumination before he goes back into the darkness, away from the station and its little destiny rays of light:

> "Which way are you boys going?" asked the cook.
> "The other way from you," Tom told him.[153]

Summing up the first category, we are, in my view, faced with three different attempts to salvage myth, or survive a subsequent mythical loss. In Dinesen's "Syndfloden over Norderney," the myth of heroism is mocked because the extreme existences of a false aristocrat, an "untouched" Madonna, and an all-of-a-sudden loving couple all represent masks covering depraved heroic ideals. The attempt of salvation or purification for the characters consists of their removal of masks and approach to each other as "naked" human beings, but this attempt is futile, for they will, eventually, be swept away by the flood and die.

"Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte" by Peter Høeg deals with a mythical, symbolical awareness of life and death which builds up to the definition of existential truths. But the truths presented turn out to be eccentric, political, or subjective, all valid and all void—and by the end, their importance is mocked and nullified by practical reality. As for Hemingway's "The Light of the World," the Christ-myth is twisted and belied by prostitutes and gays to such an extent in the story that it reveals to the protagonist, Nick Adams, that *integrity* is all that can be salvaged in a depraved world without ideals and in which no symbolic, mythical

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[152] Hemingway, 297.

[153] Hemingway, 297.

significance is left intact. Thus, what is salvaged by the end of the three stories, is simply the state of existing for the characters, in awareness of their lost ideals.

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Moving on to the second thematic category, the events or actions leading to a radical change in the course of Isak Dinesen's "Storme" are, first of all, initiated by Mr Sørensen's decision to stage William Shakespeare's play; secondly, by the actual storm that occurs at sea; and thirdly, by the fatal prophecy that Malli arbitrarily encounters in the Bible. Mr Sørensen is the artist and creator who wishes to stage a great, immortal play and, involuntarily, winds up staging the life of his leading actress, Malli, as Ariel. Sørensen's personality as a creator is divided into two "tendencies." On the one hand, he is described as equipped with "en vældig, uafhængig Natur, der krævede at skabe og styre en egen Verden omkring sig [a considerable, independent nature which demanded the creation and controlling of a personal world around him]."[154] This characteristic suggests a similarity to the very storm element that Mr Sørensen seeks to subjugate. But on the other hand, he is also "sin Kunsts lydige Tjener [the obedient servant of his art]"[155] which, of course, insinuates that something more powerful than Sørensen's wishes—namely providence—determines the fate of the characters in "Storme."

Consequently, the relationship between Malli and Arndt is not really motivated by their active *love*, but by a number of passive *circumstances* that have brought together the two young people and made the idea of marriage seem an obviousness to them. Furthermore, the brotherly/sisterly relationship between Ferdinand and Malli—compare for instance "hendes eget Ansigt antog herunder hans Ansigts Udtryk, de to kom til at ligne hinanden som en Broder og Søster [her own face hereby assumed his facial expression, so that

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[154] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 77.

[155] Ibid., 78.

the two of them came to look like each other as a brother and sister]"[156]—has also arisen from the given circumstances. *They* were the ones who could have become lovers.

In general, Malli's relations with the other characters are dominated by a-sexuality and androgyny. Initially, Mr Sørensen overlooks her sex when he selects her for Ariel,[157] and as a young girl, Malli looks like "en opløben Dreng [a lanky boy]."[158] Moreover, her own mother "falls in love" with her in a most peculiar way.[159] This androgyny more than suggests the identity between Malli and Ariel, hence, Malli as an unearthly being; a god(ess). The description of her thorough transfiguration into Ariel during the rehearsals with Mr Sørensen confirms this identity and also, Malli's immediate understanding of Arndt's suffering reveals her supernatural existence.

Subsequently, two main ideas form the rest of the tale that follows Dinesen's fundamental characterization of figures and narration of events. Firstly, it is the merging of play and reality, or rather, the *replacement* of reality with the play. Secondly, it is the determination of Malli's destiny by the Bible passage, together with the curse of Arndt. Considering the first point, Mr Sørensen's life within the theater consists of a tense balance between death and immortality. The staged world that he creates around himself imparts to him a feeling of immortality, and even after his death, he imagines his skull to be immortalized on stage as Yorick's head.[160]

This sentiment exists in Malli as well, although in a slightly different manner. When saving the ship and its crew during the storm at sea, Malli perceives the situation as a staged play and thus, does not fear death. But when she confronts the actual death of

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[156] Ibid., 119.

[157] Cf. Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 80.

[158] Ibid., 87.

[159] Cf. ibid., 89.

[160] Cf. ibid., 79.

Ferdinand, Malli must relate to *real* emotions and consequences, and just as Guro recognized her unfortunate destiny for having laid eyes on Arndt, Malli understands *her* curse as that of bringing unhappiness to others. Malli learns to fear death, but also, to fear her own feelings, whether they are real or a part of the play, an aspect of her mask and role.

Concerning the second point, this determination of Malli's fate is further enforced by the biblical passage which she accidentally looks up. As a message by providence, it tells her that her voice will become an ethereal prophecy and that her soul will starve and languish—Malli is an immortal figure, an Ariel, but her emotions are destined to be a mask and a role, bringing sadness to others. Virtually, Malli's fate becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy—she simply *acts* in order to fulfill her destiny as "prescribed"! The truth about her attitude toward death which she reveals in her letter to Arndt—the lack of fear and enjoyment of high-society while Ferdinand is dying—invokes in her an absorbing *guilt*, but it does not necessarily imply her departure. Comparing the feeling of guilt between Arndt and Malli, the former is released from *his* sense of guilt when told about Guro's other affair. He was driven by a (sexual) longing and desire and is now overwhelmed with emptiness and loneliness—until he meets someone else, one presumes, for Arndt has many admirers in the little town. Malli, on the other hand, is bound to her loneliness which is archetypal and fundamental, for she is incapable of freeing herself from *her* guilt—it is a condition of life for her to be unable to communicate her mortal fears while herself an immortal soul. Mr Sørensen recites from the play:

> „Vend da tilbage til dit Element!"[161]
>
> [„Return, then, to your element!"]

But the element that Malli returns to is not that of a human being. It is that of Ariel, the ethereal god. Thereby, the merging of play and narration completes itself as a staging of death versus immortality, but in my view, the question remains whether Malli actually works

[161] Blixen, Skæbne-Anekdoter, 139.

with or *against* her pre-ordained destiny. On the one hand, she realizes her effect of ill-luck on her surroundings and, accordingly, prepares to leave. But on the other, one could argue that her role as a savior—the result of her rescue of the ship during the storm—remains unfulfilled in relation to both Arndt, Ferdinand, and Mr Sørensen. For Malli does not marry Arndt, she fails to be there for the dying Ferdinand, and she does not play Ariel in Sørensen's performance, although she plays the role in reality.

However, this is exactly where Dinesen takes control of her "marionettes," demonstrating that their will may not equal the intentions of the story as art form. For, as the Danish critic Hans Holmberg points out, "Storme" is very much a tale about the confrontation with one's limits when faced with the higher purposes of art,[162] or the realization of one's opportunities which are un-wished for. In this context, Malli symbolizes the aesthetic figure who refuses to undergo a complete metamorphosis into art, but who, eventually, must submit to the laws of aesthetics and to the maxim that the way of the world is not always the same as the way of art, as Holmberg also observes.[163]

The leap from "Storme" to "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" might seem an insurmountable one, but the purpose of my four categories is to structure the main, narrative tendencies common for each group of stories, in order to gather some useful interpretative material concerning an overall mythical impression—not necessarily to perform strict comparisons between the style of the three writers. The overall mythical impression that I consider important in this second category is related to the attitude toward death shared by Malli and Francis Macomber as well as by Andreas in Høeg's "Hommage à Bournonville." Also, it involves an understanding of the lives of the characters as "attempted myths" in all three stories, their acceptance of their individual, affixed role as part of a larger mythical pattern of existence—a pattern exposing misery and irony as the only ways to insight which I will return to in my discussion.

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[162] Cf. Holmberg, 189.

[163] Cf. ibid.

However, when reading "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," one clearly understands the critic Scott Donaldson's characterization of Hemingway's style as an "absolutely brutal, cold-blooded narrative."[164] Not only is this hunting story full of ugly killing scenes, the depiction of emotional aspects is raw and merciless as well. We are dealing with a triangular drama between an American couple, Mr and Mrs. Macomber, and their hunting guide, Mr Wilson, but what constitutes the tension between these characters goes far beyond mere sexual conflicts, infidelity, and cuckoldry. Their trial of strength concerns archetypal virtues such as courage versus cowardice, bravery versus fear, and masculinity versus femininity.

The event prior to the opening of the story—Mr Macomber's embarrassing bolting during lion hunting—establishes a clear hierarchy in the position of virtues between the three people. Macomber is the handsome coward and cuckold whose well-groomed appearance, mental softness, and willing admission of fear lend him an air of femininity:

> "Don't worry about me talking," he [Wilson] said. "I have a living to make. You know in Africa no woman ever misses her lion and no white man ever bolts."
> "I bolted like a rabbit," Macomber said.
> Now what in hell were you going to do about a man who talked like that, Wilson wondered.[165]

Opposite Mr Macomber is Mr Wilson as an unattractive, but very brave and masculine man. He is a hunter, he hits his servants, and his face is red from drinking and from outdoor activities. Mrs. Macomber is "caught in the middle" as the high-society (former) beauty who navigates emotionally and sexually by means of a traditional, female intuition concerning male courage and wealth. She will not leave her husband due to the latter asset, wealth, but she squanders her sexual favors on Mr Wilson because he possesses the former, courage. A common characteristic of both Mr Wilson and Mrs. Macomber is that their personalities are

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[164] Scott Donaldson, ed., New Essays on "A Farewell to Arms" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

[165] Hemingway, 8.

static throughout the story, whereas Mr Macomber undergoes a radical change—or rather, radical events lead to his inner transformation. The only change in the two others concerns their perception of Francis Macomber. Both despise him after his first disastrous hunting-trip, and both are thrilled when Macomber succeeds in his second.

Thus, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" is all about attitudes toward death, about fear or bravery concerning death, and these values define the characters and their actions. Cowardice equals death, courage equals happiness, and the short, happy part of Macomber's life is when he demonstrates his male virility by killing the bulls:

> "Let's get the drink," said Macomber. In his life he had never felt so good. In the car Macomber's wife sat very white-faced. "You were marvellous, darling," she said to Macomber. "What a ride."[166]

But Macomber's rehabilitation is really an illusion. First of all, the chasing and hunting from the jeep is dubious and quasi-illegal. Secondly, Macomber does not even manage to kill the first bull, the only one of the three animals that Wilson did not shoot at also. The final, accidental shot resulting in Francis Macomber's death completes the story's ridiculing of the courage and fearlessness which he has so shortly attained and experienced. Having just got rid of fear, Macomber is shot down like the animals he is hunting, but by his own wife who, in replacement of *his* fear, is beginning to fear herself, namely her husband's new courage, virility, and anger which is beyond her control:

> "You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly," his wife said contemptuously, but her contempt was not secure. *She was very afraid of something* (italics mine).[167]

However, I perceive Francis Macomber as one of Hemingway's "failed aristocrats"—compare for instance Langbaum's observations on aristocratic values in Hemingway which I

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[166] Hemingway, 23.

[167] Ibid., 26.

commented on in my introduction.[168] Both Dinesen and Hemingway "see the aristocrat as out of place in modern life,"[169] and Macomber is, in my view, one of these lost aristocrats because he lives up to the Somali proverb: "A brave man is always frightened three times by a lion; when he first sees his track, when he first hears him roar and when he first confronts him."[170]

Hence, Francis Macomber is really a brave man because he is afraid, and remaining within my introduction, Elsa Gress points out Hemingway's determinist view: *courage* is the only virtue in a world where the role of the individual is simply to endure life.[171] Consequently, Macomber meets his fate which is choice-less and without hope, but he meets it with his *courage* intact and thus, the events and actions that change the meaning of his life are also the ones that end it. Thereby, it becomes obvious that misery *is* the way to insight which I also mentioned in my introduction, but more importantly: "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" as well as Dinesen's "Storme" both demonstrate a determinism that follows the same progress—the assertion of the self leads to a fear of failure which results in the attack on the things threatening the successful self-assertion. I will return to the significance of this pattern in my discussion.

The focus of Peter Høeg's "Hommage à Bournonville" is the artist as a symbolic figure and his strive for unity with the artistic feeling, for accordance with the intention of God, and for eternal life—a focus which is also predominant in many of Dinesen's tales. The narrative frame of "Hommage à Bournonville" is the "notorious" story within the story. A friendship between Danish Jakob and Muslim Rumi—representing Western and Eastern

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[168] Cf. note 12.

[169] Langbaum, 5.

[170] Hemingway, 11.

[171] Cf. note 13.

culture and ideals, respectively—shapes the contours of Jakob's universal story about the great art of dancing and its reverse side: lies, illusion, and renunciation.

The two perspectives of explanation and understanding, Jakob's versus Rumi's, are constantly juxtaposed in Høeg's story. Rumi, a Muslim pietist and ascetic, founds his life upon the five columns of duty which are faith, prayer, fast, pilgrimage, and alms. Jakob "translates" Rumi's religion into the modern, Western dance culture, seeing the theater as a temple and the audience as pilgrims gathering to worship the dancers who symbolize the sacrificial substitution for faith, prayer, and fast:

> De kom for at se mennesker på scenen der *tror*.… Og de kom for at høre, hvordan det lyder når nogen *beder* til et eller andet.… Og de kom for at se *fasten*, og jeg er sikker på, det havde noget at gøre med, at de til daglig var så optaget af at hobe op, at de *måtte* ind og se mennesker der frivilligt gav afkald for at få et glimt af Gud.[172]
>
> [They came to see people on the stage who *believe*.… And they came to hear what it sounds like when someone *prays* for something.… And they came to see the *fast*, and I am sure it had something to do with the fact that, every day, they were themselves so occupied with accumulating that they *had* to go in and see people who voluntarily renounced to get a glimpse of God.]

But dancing represents much more than reaching God and happiness:

> Hver aften viser du i teatret, at pligten og friheden står i spænd mod hinanden i universet.… Hver aften beviser du på scenen, at begæret og dyden står i spænd mod hinanden i universet.[173]
>
> [Every night you show in the theater that duty and freedom are in suspense in the universe.… Every night you prove on the stage that desire and virtue are in suspense in the universe.]

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[172] Høeg, 53.

[173] Ibid., 71.

Thus, the world of dance is constructed upon opposites. The dancers must exercise renunciation, discipline, and suppression of feelings in real life, in order to express emotions, sensuality, and desire on stage. It is also a world in which lies and make-believe are more important than the truth. By keeping from Andreas the truth about her sexual nature, the girl invokes in him an ability to dance beautifully—"jeg forstod, at min usandhed havde været et stort kunstværk [I understood that my untruth had been a great work of art]"[174]—because Andreas's dance becomes inspired by the illusion of a pure and unattainable love.

But the illusion is revealed and replaced with ugly reality, and Høeg's artifice in the exposure of this reality is both horrifying and comical—and very subtle. The "divine whiteness" that Jakob and Andreas see in the girl's dressing-room does *not* signify her transformation into an angel; on the contrary, it constitutes nothing less than the pale buttocks of the club-footed violinist, as he moves rhythmically over the girl during their intercourse in an armchair! This episode radically changes Andreas's life. From being at the very center of great art, he becomes an artistic outcast who stages his own suicide and returns to the scene playing a different role, namely that of a powerful, diabolic avenger. Thereby, Andreas's role also changes in terms of his relations to God. Earlier in the story, the girl describes herself as God because she, like God, is an outsider and finds herself *outside* of things: "Og det er sådan, man kan kende Gud. Ved at han står helt udenfor [and that is how one knows God. By his being completely outside of things]."[175]

Presumed dead, Andreas now incarnates the outsider and, in my view, his power over the girl during their final dance demonstrates that the closeness to God's intention, the achieving of unity with the artistic feeling, is reached by means of a destiny on the suspended verge of divinity or fall. I read this achievement as an understanding of the difference between truth and lies in "Hommage à Bournonville." Andreas dances with the girl as the narrator remarks that "hvis der er nogen retfærdighed til, så har hun i det tomrum mødt

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[174] Høeg, 71.

[175] Ibid., 72.

forskellen på sandheden og løgn [if there is any justice, she encountered in this void the difference between truth and lie]."[176] Both are compared to God, and both have built up lies about themselves, the girl about her lust and Andreas about his death. Eventually, as Jakob ends his story—and it is uncertain whether he and Andreas are actually the same person—the godly status also includes him and Rumi. The two refugees on the boat are completely outside of things and events, and both have seen a meaningful pattern in the dramatic events. Jakob/Andreas has permanently implemented the role of the outsider into his own being and forgives from the perspective of the club-footed violinist. Rumi understands forgiveness because of his religion:

> Allah alene er det
> der med godt og ondt skal belønne
> menneskenes handlinger.[177]
>
> [Allah alone is the one
> who, by means of good and evil, shall award
> the actions of man.]

As a conclusion of "Hommage à Bournonville," I will turn to some observations by Søren Vinterberg, from his newspaper review of Høeg's short story. He states that Jakob/Andreas is an artist cut off from an ordinary existence and destined to a life which is separated from art, showing the *de*-construction of ideals of beauty and art in the story, but the *re*-construction of life itself.[178] In this remark, I also see an indication of the artist's *suffering* in Høeg, due to the recognition of a life without art and beauty, without hope and myth. The girl is aware of this fate of man and explains to Andreas:

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[176] Ibid., 76.

[177] Høeg, 78.

[178] Cf. Søren Vinterberg, review of Fortællinger om natten, by Peter Høeg, in Politiken (28 September 1990).

> Menneskene i denne verden, og særligt på dette teater, *skal lide*, og det skal de, fordi de hvert sekund i deres liv stræber i to modsatte retninger.[179]
>
> [The people in this world, and especially in this theater, *must suffer*, and this is because they strive, every second of their life, in two opposite directions.]

But the opposites and multiples all lead to one thing: misery! The three stories show how the figures attempt to fight their fate before succumbing to it, but also—and this is very important—how the acceptance of their destiny involves an artistic fall and the loss of myths as aesthetic conditions of their lives. Thus, Malli loses her self-awareness as a heroine and savior, she confronts her artistic limits in the shape of death and unhappiness, resulting in her withdrawal to an artless world. Francis Macomber is not allowed his heroic role either, he is killed just as he senses his symbolic status as a fearless hero, just as his life exceeds the aesthetic limits of mere endurance. As for Andreas, his artistic victory over death—his mythical and archetypal ability to realize "dansens, kunstens, muligheder for at besejre tyngden, at forvandle tilværelsens dødvægt til en æstetisk befriende aktivitet [the possibilities of dancing, of art, to conquer gravity, to change the death weight of being into an aesthetically emancipating activity]"[180]—results in a suffering existence of separation from art and consequently, I see another clear pattern of misery as the only way to insight in the stories. The lives of the characters are permeated with artistic longing back to "the finite" which I read as essential, existential myths forming the ideals of their narrative existences. At the same time, the figures are kept away from the unification with myth, and in my discussion chapter, we shall determine the nature, reason, and significance of this mythical suffering.

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[179] Høeg, 71.

[180] Holmberg, 104.

The process of transformation in Isak Dinesen's "Aben" occurs between the virginal prioress of a traditional European convent and her diabolic monkey from Zanzibar in Africa. The double nature of the prioress is indicated from the beginning of the tale. On the one hand, she leads a quiet life as an old maid in the convent, but on the other, she spends "nogle af sit Livs lykkeligste Timer [some of her life's happiest hours]"[181] at the gambling-table, she serves a lot of wine to her guests, and her strange flirtation with her own nephew—compare for example when she assures Boris that if Athene does not want him for a husband, then *she* does herself[182]—suggests a peculiar oscillation between a-sexuality and seductiveness in the story.

In general, Apollonian and Dionysian values are contrasted in "Aben." First of all, the reader is informed about Boris's bad reputation in society which apparently has to do with Greek conceptions, that is, homosexuality and orgies. His wildness forms a clear contrast to the innocence, morality, and chastity of the woman he intends to marry, Athene Hopballehus. But secondly, Apollonian and Dionysian aspects also characterize the prioress's strategies concerning bringing the two young people together. She claims that *duty* is the only way to happiness, but at the foot of the Venus statue—in replacement of Cupid!—Athene spotted the prioress's monkey, and the wild nature of the animal opposes the woman's pious idea of duty. Thus, there is a struggle between her "inner monkey" and outer woman throughout the tale, and it is difficult to say when the former is actually taken over by the latter in the story, before the dramatic counter-change toward the end.

For instance, when the prioress makes her volte-face regarding the marriage of Boris and Athene,[183] is she herself, or does her reaction reveal the monkey, desiring to unite the young couple in carnal lust?

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[181] Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 87.

[182] Cf. Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 96.

[183] Cf. ibid., 95.

> Med Tanke paa den lykkelige Ordning, der her blev stillet ham i Udsigt, kyssede Boris taknemmeligt sin Tante paa Haanden, men fik i samme Øjeblik et saa frygteligt Indtryk af Styrke og Snille, at det var som om det ikke var et Menneske men en *Naturkraft*, som havde rørt ham (italics mine).[184]
>
> [Thinking about the happy arrangements held out to him, Boris gratefully kissed his aunt's hand, but at this moment, he got such a terrible impression of power and cunning that it felt like it was not a human being, but a *force of nature* that had touched him (italics mine).]

Boris senses something supernatural about the prioress, and in the following reflections on the difference between humans and God, which he defines as God's inability to stand *duration*, it becomes quite evident that the prioress fits the godly description more than the human one. Also, when the count gives Boris his blessing to marry his daughter, he lets the young man know his feeling that Boris has been led "af en stærkere Vilje end [s]in egen [by a stronger will than his own]," [185] namely that of his aunt who controls the young characters like marionettes on a string.

However, Boris has a mask of his own and is aware of playing a role. Before the "dinner of persuasion" with Athene and the prioress, it is described how "han havde lagt sin Maske med største Omhu foran Spejlet … i Overensstemmelse med Rollens Karakter [he had put on his mask with great care in front of the mirror … in accordance with the role of the character]." [186] Boris's mask also contains sinister and diabolic "monkey" elements, for instance the imagination that he could love Athene's skeleton alone.[187]

The fight between Athene and Boris represents an archetypal struggle between feminine and masculine forces, fire and water. But it also signifies the fight between *Eros* and *Thanatos* which, in psycho-analytical parlance means the power of life versus the death

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[184] Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 96.

[185] Ibid., 104.

[186] Ibid., 115.

[187] Cf. ibid., 120.

instinct. In Greek mythology, *Eros* is the god of love and is depicted as a boy. Athene is also described as a boy—"en kraftig ung Matros-dreng [a strong young sailor-boy]"[188]—and she fights like a man with Boris, without "kvindelig Tilbøjelighed til at bide og kradse [female propensity toward biting and scratching]."[189] *Thanatos* is the god or demon of death in Greek mythology, and Boris's demonic imagination—his skeleton fantasy and enjoyment of "Raseriets Ekstase [the ecstasy of rage]"[190]—is an evident parallel:

> De gamle Tiders rasende Kærlighed, den, der ikke har sin Rod i Sympati eller Slægtskab, men i Modsætning og Modstand, fyldte ham helt og holdent.[191]
>
> [The furious love of old times, the one that does not spring from sympathy or kinship, but from contrast and resistance, entirely filled him.]

By the end of "Aben," when the great transformation of the prioress occurs, all themes of contrast and resistance are given free rein in the story. Boris's self-declared destiny—described as the fulfilling of his wishes just as he no longer desires their fulfillment[192]—is juxtaposed to Athene's presumable fate; to wish for nothing, but to get it all unwillingly. Boris prefers the role of the unhappy, rejected lover,[193] but must play the role of a successful one, and Athene does not wish to marry him, but must do so against her will.

However, the discrepancies between the young couple are suddenly united when confronting the two-faceted nature of the prioress. She becomes the very goddess of love whom Athene's father, the count, describes as a beautiful woman on the front-side and a laughing monkey on the reverse side. "Men hvordan … kunde de paa den

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[188] Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 124.

[189] Ibid., 126.

[190] Ibid., 125.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Cf. ibid., 93.

[193] Cf. ibid., 115.

Kærlighedsgudinde se, hvad der var for, og hvad der var bag [but how could they tell what was front and back on this goddess of love]?"[194] The answer is to be found in the "restored" prioress's Latin quote which means: "Learn justice and do not despise the gods." In my view, this doctrine suggests the justification of *both* Apollonian and Dionysian aspects, the necessity of knowing *both* good and evil in the search of one's proper role or way in life.

Consulting Robert Langbaum, he supports this ambivalent reading by pointing out that Boris and Athene see evil in the face of good.[195] Moreover, he employs a consistent interpretation of a-sexuality in "Aben"—the celibacy of the prioress, Boris's homosexuality, and Athene's androgyny—in order to show the story's historical ambition. In Langbaum's view, the values of past and present—Boris's homosexuality which represents ancient Greece, an effete pastoral tradition and thus, ideals of the past versus his next stage in life, his future marriage and the woman as principle—unite in Dinesen's story as elements of experience leading to a readiness for the future; old times generate a new order. Thus, eventually, Boris employs the prioress's maxim of one way to happiness, in order to realize his own family motto: "Find your way, or break away from it!"[196]

In Peter Høeg's "Forholdsregler mod alderdommen," the main transformation theme also concerns family traditions and ways. The clash between conventions and an alternative perception is represented through the *young* Blassermand family, their flirtations with the ideas of their time, such as Nazism and Darwinism, versus Henrik's aunt, the controversial *old* artist whose life is centered around timeless and universal values which are described by means of a musical cycle. The story's self-awareness is initiated by the introductory lines: "Dette er en opera i to akter med tre medvirkende samt bipersoner [this is an opera in two acts with three performers plus subordinate characters]."[197] It is indeed

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[194] Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 106.

[195] Cf. Langbaum, 88.

[196] Cf. ibid., 93.

[197] Høeg, 287.

possible to view the entire story as an *Opéra Bouffe* or *Opéra Comique*, consisting of an *ouverture* that introduces the figures, the aunt's *recitatives*, the *duets* between her and Henrik, or between Henrik and Pernille, the *choir* of older people in the ballroom, and the characteristically surprising *finale*. Moreover, the characters in Høeg's story are also connected to specific, musical *leitmotifs*, for example the military music of the Blassermand family, or the aunt's occasional piano pieces composed especially for Henrik and Pernille.

The musical cycle confirms a determinist idea of man's fate in the story, or his limitations in relation to "greater matters." Like a piece of music, man's destiny must follow its pre-set course and arrangement of notes, and submit to the higher purpose of a melodious flow which is beyond his earthly power. And power is the emblem of the Blassermand family. Their strong military music and leading actions in the fight against weakness and impurity suggest the weighing of *function* over art and aesthetics, of rationality over the irrational in their world. But already during the first few pages of "Forholdsregler mod alderdommen," the disintegration of Henrik Blassermand's ideals is indicated. For example, he identifies himself with Friedrich Nietzsche who became insane,[198] and the "naturlig[e] tilbøjelighed til forædling [natural propensity toward refinement]"[199] in the course of human life more than underlines the unavoidable failure of the Blassermand family's measures against old age—the older the person, the more distinct his refinement, the narrative point seems to be.

Opposed to this young and "past-less" microcosm of function is the old and artistic universe of Henrik's aunt, Leonora Apollonia.[200] Almost as an echo of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Henrik, like Pip, encounters in the old woman's house *love* and its irrational

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[198] Cf. Blixen, Syv Fantastiske Fortællinger, 288.

[199] Cf. Høeg, 288.

[200] At first, one wonders why her name is not "Dionysia"—thus representing the unrestrained form of art versus Henrik's organized system of musical production—but by the end of Høeg's story, after all, it becomes quite obvious who possesses a vulgar spirit and who represents the fine arts.

aspects of attraction and repulsion, *silence* as an aesthetic goal, and *madness* as the only valid explanation of Leonora's ideas. In short, the place becomes a symbol of existential contrasts, and though Henrik devotes his outer life to defeating them, they inevitably shape his inner self.

Henrik's relations to his aunt Leonora are described as "safe" as well as "incomprehensible," as "the beginning" as well as "the end."[201] Consequently, she functions as a god, fairy, or prophet in the story, generating Henrik's self-understanding and formulating his destiny, from their first meeting when she wishes for him to learn silence, to her remark that he must listen to God, and to her final manifestation of his limits as a human being. Thus, Henrik's call—"at udvide grænsen for det menneskelige jeg's størrelse [to expand the limit of greatness in the human subject]"[202] by means of self-awareness, capabilities, knowledge, and power—is confronted with time, age, and experience, all incarnated in one single woman. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes more and more evident that Leonora Blassermand represents the story's *moira*[203] as well as Henrik's. Twice, she indicates her knowledge of the occurring events as parts of an opera on the narrative level:

> "Du ved jo, Henrik," fortsatte hun, "hvordan det i snart sagt enhver af les grands opéras er det overraskende møde der indleder den egentlige handling." … "Spil for mig, lille børn," sagde Leonora. "Vi kan ikke lade denne opera bestå alene af pauser."[204]
>
> ["You know, Henrik," she continued, "how in almost any of the great operas, it is the surprising meeting that inaugurates the actual plot." … "Play for me, children," Leonora said. "We cannot have this opera consist merely of pauses."]

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[201] Cf. Høeg, 302.

[202] Ibid., 319.

[203] The descriptive term for any of the three goddesses of Destiny in Greek mythology.

[204] Høeg, 317.

Concerning her influence on Henrik's fate, Leonora not only describes to him his life's goal, she alters it, too. Having outlined to Henrik the modern individual's strive for emancipation from God, nature, and other individuals—which in her view signifies loneliness, but in his view represents the ultimate, desirable human stage[205]—Leonora promotes Henrik's ideological "fall," using a means far more powerful than power as Henrik knows it. She transforms her extrovert self in order to generate Henrik's introvert transformation. Henrik's aunt has actually passed away prior to his return to her house, but apparently, this truth is irrelevant to her positioning of him in a situation where he can receive *her* truths, the negations of his own.

Thus, meeting again with Pernille, the first limit of human greatness is revealed to Henrik. It is *love* and is understood as the necessity to exceed one's self in order to approach someone else. Then, dancing with Leonora in the ballroom full of old people, Henrik confronts his second limitation which is *age* and the ever-existing awareness of *death*. But the most important recognition for Henrik is when his own transformation occurs, in the clash between these two limits—love and death. Discovering his own inability to kill Leonora and Pernille because he has feelings for them, he ceases to be "Henrik Blassermand, der skulle løfte fremtiden på sine skuldre [Henrik Blassermand who was to carry the future on his shoulders]"[206] and becomes, instead, "en orm på bunden af universet [a worm at the bottom of the universe]."[207]

This limitation is the limitation of *God*, and "overfor Gud gør vi klogest i at lytte og bøje os [facing God, we had better listen and submit]."[208] But the question arises whether Leonora Blassermand can be identified with God and hence, whether "Forholdsregler mod

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[205] Cf. Høeg, 320.

[206] Ibid., 333.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid.

alderdommen" can be said to celebrate myths, the fantastic, or "the power of the dead." In my view, the existential pattern of the human subject—his development of ideas and meeting with their limitations—not only resembles a musical composition, it also suggests a time-based *ricorso* regarding art. Thus, I see "Forholdsregler mod alderdommen" as communicating a wish for immortality in terms of artistic creation. The transformation of Leonora leads to Henrik's own transformation and thus, parallels a *metempsychosis*—a "soul wandering"—of the elements of art from the older to the younger. In that sense, Høeg's story expresses a *re*-quest for the old, better order in replacement of a decaying culture, as Lotte Thyrring Andersen notes in her review of *Fortællinger om natten*.[209]

The final story that I wish to fit into the category of transformation is Hemingway's "The Battler." Similarly to Leonora's influence on Henrik, the former prizefighter Ad Francis becomes a sort of prophet for Nick Adams in this story. Having run away from home, Nick is thrown off the train as a blind passenger. The introductory descriptions of his hiking on the tracks through swamps and dark waters[210] indicate his entering into an almost Conradian, mysterious "heart of darkness":

> It was dark and he was a long way off from anywhere.[211]

Also, Nick's encounter with the "misshapen" and "dead looking" fighter[212] suggests that he is about to confront subhuman powers that are difficult to control. For example, when Ad Francis insists that Nick feels his slow heartbeat, it is a both funny and grim anticipation of the crazy man's unpredictable behavior. His slow pulse is indicative of a strong physical health, but his calm mood is really the cover-up of an unstable and violent temper. Thus, the ostensibly tranquil ex-boxer is actually quite fierce whereas his "dark servant," the negro

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[209] Cf. note 14.

[210] Cf. Hemingway, 98.

[211] Ibid., 97.

[212] Cf. ibid., 99.

Bugs, turns out to be a gentleman. In this constellation of characters I see the preparations for Nick Adams's existential "lesson" which is launched by Ad Francis's request:

> "Let me take your knife, Nick," he said.[213]

The black man attempts to smooth things out, but the prizefighter snaps and tries to attack Nick:

> The little man looked down at Nick's feet. As he looked down the negro, who had followed behind him as he moved away from the fire, set himself and tapped him across the base of the skull. He fell forward and Bugs dropped the cloth-wrapped blackjack on the grass.[214]

Bugs explains to Nick that his counterattack was a necessity: "I have to do it to *change* him when he gets that way" (italics mine).[215] Consequently, Ad Francis's transformation is a recurring event which is caused by "too many beatings"[216] and a somewhat unclear incestuous relationship with a woman assumed to be his sister. But the symbolic value of the prizefighter's transformation represents to Nick a paradoxical knowledge in terms of good versus bad, power versus weakness, and achievement versus loss.

In "The Battler," it is insinuated that the sister/lover who eventually left Ad Francis perhaps stayed with him only because of his success and wealth at that time. Now that he is no longer a famous boxer, she sends him money to support him, presumably out of guilt. However, Bugs states that *he* "don't have to commit no larceny"[217] to appreciate Ad Francis's company. On the whole—though Francis's existence prophesizes the rise and fall of a star, thus destroying Nick Adams's possible illusions about greatness and "being

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[213] Hemingway, 100.

[214] Ibid., 102.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid., 103.

tough"[218]—the negro Bugs incarnates, in fact, Nick's true prophet, or rather, "guardian angel." A soft-spoken man, he shields Nick from rough reality and demonstrates to him how aristocratic virtues such as care, consideration, and honesty are capable of *battling* the dark transformations of an unhappy soul.

It is my argument that Nick leaves the battler and Bugs as transformed himself. The introductory, ritual washing of his hands and knees prepares him for their ceremonial acts of sacrifice. Ad Francis's sacrifice signifies the trade of past greatness and power for present loss and insanity. Bug's sacrifice represents a complete devotion to the prizefighter, even though it means an isolation from the world and long speeches with no real addressee—compare for instance his closing monologue to Nick.[219] Thus, in my view, Bugs is "the firelight in the clearing" to Nick,[220] and I read his wordless *exeunt* as a proof of his own inner transformation. Opposite the beginning of "The Battler" where Nick cursed the brakeman for throwing him off the train, he now silently "climbed the embankment and started up the track."[221] Nick has experienced generosity hand in hand with hostility, weakness hand in hand with greatness, and this blend of sadness and misery with compassion and understanding, united in the ambivalent friendship between Ad and Bugs, draws the attention back to the story's title—who is, after all, the "battler" in this narration? Consulting a dictionary, the word "battler" is defined as a person who has continually worked under great difficulties to achieve something—and this is certainly what Ad Francis has done, what Bugs is doing and also, the way I interpret "The Battler," the precognition of Nick Adams's existential fate.

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[218] Hemingway, 98.

[219] Cf. ibid., 103-104.

[220] Ibid., 104.

[221] Ibid.

As a general characteristic of my transformation category, it is important to note the two-faceted nature of good and evil in "Aben," the two sides of artistic expression in "Forholdsregler mod alderdommen," and the two aspects of humanity in "The Battler." To me, these dual structures either undermine clear-cut myths in the tales—as is the case in Dinesen's story where Dionysian and Apollonian ideals are mixed, and *Eros* and *Thanatos* merge—or they establish a mythical awareness of the past, opposed to a myth-less present. This latter description is central in the tales by Høeg and Hemingway. In "Forholdsregler mod alderdommen," the immortality of Leonora Blassermand manifests that love, age, and God are at all times valid, archetypal limitations of the human being who cannot stage his own, immortal myth, but must submit to mythical "standards" of the past, the *leitmotifs* of an ancient world. "The Battler" also emphasizes a better past of pride and power versus the "mentally ill" present that survives only by means of sacrifices.

However, the structure of duality in my transformation category altogether points to myth as a dissolving concept in the three stories. Dionysian and Apollonian virtues as well as love and death have become impossible to distinguish or define—they are two confusing sides of the same coin. The great aesthetic achievements of the past, based on myths and legends, or the legendary power of a once-famous prizefighter, have now been replaced with mechanical artistic production (the military Blassermand music), or by pathetic, miserable, and disturbed existences (Ad and Bugs). It seems as if myth, the ground definition of storytelling, is confronted with great difficulties when entering these modern stories.

* * *

In the fourth and final category—the wish of the characters to change their fate, or the change of their fate without their control—we find Isak Dinesen's "En Historie om en Perle" an excellent example. Initially, we are introduced to the somewhat inappropriate marriage between an officer from an old family and a civil merchant's daughter. The class-conscious inappropriateness of their connection—together with the narrative information that the two young people have married solely out of love—immediately insinuates a destined

hubris and its potential result in *nemesis* in the text. Something simply *must* come between such an easily obtained happiness in a true Dinesen-tale, and the aunt Maren's story to Jensine, about a similar, imbalanced relationship, becomes the predilection of the fatal plot development. It is described how the aunt has decided to live for others, having "indsat sig selv som Familiens Samvittighed [installed herself as the family conscience]."[222] Thus, she functions as "a moral parasite on the entire generation,"[223] and Jensine has inherited this moral ballast in relation to her marriage with Alexander. During their honeymoon, she is surprised by the *passion* of love which is phallicly represented through the surrounding landscape's erect appearance. Moreover, her husband's fearless and carefree existence is upsetting and incomprehensible to her moral melancholy and concern:

> Hun kunde ikke forestille sig, hvordan han havde baaret sig ad med at leve indtil nu, men hun vidste nok, at hans Liv paa alle Maader havde været forskelligt fra hendes eget. Nu forstod hun, i virkelig Panik, at hun her … var i Hænderne paa et Menneske som var fuldkommen uvidende om, ja som rentud fornægtede Tyngdeloven.[224]
>
> [She could not imagine how he had managed to live until now, but she knew to be sure that his life in every way had been different from her own. Now she understood, in real panic, that here, … she was in the hands of a human being totally unaware of, indeed outright denying, the laws of gravity.]

Jensine sets herself the goal of teaching her husband how to fear, but instead, she becomes the one who learns a moral, namely that of her aunt's story: cobbler, stick to your last! The pearl necklace signifies the omen for Jensine's destiny. Having broken the only thing "som hendes Mand nogensinde havde frygtet at miste [that her husband had ever feared to lose],"[225] her anxiety about their marriage seems self-fulfilling: "Hvad varslede det vel for dem [what did

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[222] Blixen, Vinter-Eventyr (Haslev: Gyldendal, 1942), 39.

[223] Cf. ibid.

[224] Ibid., 41.

[225] Ibid., 45.

this perhaps bode for them]?"[226] When she goes to the shoemaker to have him re-string the pearls, she passes them to him as if she "gav sin Skæbne i hans Haand [put her destiny into his hands]."[227] The peculiar meeting between Jensine and a certain Mr (Henrik) Ibsen is also centered around the above proverb, to stick to one's last. The shoemaker never made it as a poet and artist, but Ibsen questions whether this is actually his loss, or whether his shoemaking is not as valuable an art form. Jensine agrees whereupon Ibsen essentially mocks her agreement with him:

> Man gør klogere, mener De, i at trille Piller og blande Mixturer for den syge Menneskelighed … end i at skrive Tragedier?… Det er sandelig en brav Spøg, et fint Indfald af Skæbnen.[228]
>
> [One is better off, you think, by making pills and mixtures for sick humanity … than by writing tragedies?… That is a worthy joke, to be sure, a fine whim of fate.]

The quotation could be suggesting a thematic focus on the role of the artist and creation in "En Historie om en Perle." Similarly to Dinesen's "Babettes Gæstebud," the shoemaker is an "artist-in-life" who must settle doing his *second*-best, but who gets his one chance of making an aesthetic difference, by pleasing—or teasing!—Jensine with the extra, more beautiful and extravagant pearl. However, in this paper's context, it is more relevant to observe how the event leads Jensine's destiny toward a moral judgment over herself. For Ibsen's comment turns out to be another prophecy for the young woman. When she, eventually, decides to count the pearls in her re-stringed necklace, she discovers that there is one more pearl than before![229] Thus, Alexander mocks Jensine's moral responsibility and concern by means of his

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[226] Blixen, Vinter-Eventyr, 45.

[227] Ibid., 46.

[228] Ibid., 48.

[229] Ibid., 49.

own fearlessness, Ibsen mocks her "inartistic" opinion about keeping a low profile in life, and the shoemaker mocks her fear of losing the pearls by *adding* one to the necklace.

Facing this manner of toying with the concerned life of others—together with the fact that she can never "faa Bugt med disse Mennesker [overcome these people]"[230]—Jensine surprisingly experiences that "hendes Nederlag ikke havde noget at betyde [her defeat did not matter]."[231] Her attempt to change the people around her generates, instead, her own change, and on a narrative level, one could argue that her mystical, romantic view is replaced with modern transience:

> „Er da," tænkte hun „hver Forskel borte? Og er der intet mærkeligt tilbage her under Maanens Vandring?"[232]
>
> [„Have, then," she thought „all differences disappeared? And is there nothing strange left here under the wanderings of the moon?"]

In my view, the ending can be interpreted in two opposite ways. On the one hand, Jensine realizes that her aunt's story has been fulfilled, that she *is* influenced by even a servant's attitude. But her decision to fight back, paradoxically by begging for mercy,[233] could be suggesting a rejection of the static archetype and Jensine's emancipation from the mythical pattern and her destined role.

The knowledge passed on from the shoemaker—to have some fun, or to laugh back when the devil laughs at us, the point from "Syndfloden over Norderney"—could thus be interpreted as Jensine's victory, her way of taking control of the pattern she has seen and understood. On the other hand, the final paragraph, describing the married couple staring at the aunt in the street from each their window, insinuates another, negative fulfillment of her

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[230] Blixen, Vinter-Eventyr, 52.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Ibid., 53.

[233] Cf. ibid.

story. Something has indeed come between the loving man and woman, as a punishment from providence for Jensine's failure to stick to her last. Consequently, and either way, Jensine's attempt to change her fate actually brings about a change which is totally beyond her control and thus, points out Robert Langbaum's observation that "our destiny is to play our roles to the hilt, … to see them with the artist's, which is to say God's eye as cooperating in the marionette comedy."[234]

In Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain," another woman learns a lesson similar to Jensine's in Dinesen's tale. In the Italian setting of a hotel in pouring rain, feminine and masculine symbols are presented and literally laid out in front of the American tourist couple. Their room faces the flowing (female) sea as well as the erect (male) palms in the garden, and they have access to the glistening war monument—presumably another erect object! This thematic juxtaposition of sexual values takes a turn toward the feminine side by means of the woman's sudden and strong desire for the (she-)cat in the rain:

> "I'm going down and get that kitty," the American wife said.
> "I'll do it," her husband offered from the bed.
> "No, I'll get it. The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table."[235]

The cat, of course, represents the woman, which is why it is so important for her to get it herself, as a gesture of independence in relation to her husband. He seems neither concerned about nor indifferent to his wife's request, but the reader senses that this neutrality might be the cause of the woman's symbolic rebellion. However, her following encounter with the hotel-keeper indicates that her struggle is really based on her inner, emotional discrepancies. She is fascinated by the manager's male dignity and authority, "she liked the way he wanted to serve her,"[236] meaning she likes to play the role of a woman opposite a man. The cat in the

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[234] Langbaum, 12.

[235] Hemingway, 129.

[236] Ibid., 130.

rain represents her means of realizing this femininity, of becoming more of a woman in relation to her husband, invoking in him more than neutral reactions.

But the cat has now disappeared, and the woman's disappointment causes the maid to ask her, in Italian, if she has lost something.[237] The maid's Italian, together with her tight face when she speaks English, suggests that *she* is closely affiliated with her own identity, and this is exactly what the American wife has lost, or never had: a clearly defined identity. Her attempt to get the cat expresses her wish for coming to terms with herself as a woman, and the constant narrative mixture of "woman" and "girl," "cat" and "kitty," underlines her existential confusion in terms of who she is. By the end of "Cat in the Rain," the American woman transfers her wish for the cat to a wish for long hair and a change in the way that she looks:

> "Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.…
> "I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."[238]

The quote expresses both the woman's strive for femininity and her struggle with a passionless, "androgynous" marriage—but her husband does not want her to change, and when she articulates her wishes for womanhood in a way that resembles the behavior of a spoiled little girl, he simply asks her to "shut up and get something to read."[239] However, "Cat in the Rain" is more than just a story about a bored American woman who gets funny ideas in the rain because she has nothing else to do. Its ambivalent point is revealed as the maid enters with a cat for the wife. On the one hand, whether it is the same cat or not, this incident symbolizes some satisfaction and fulfillment of needs in the story, a potential, successful change in the woman. But on the other, the woman's receiving of "a big tortoise-

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[237] Cf. Hemingway, 130.

[238] Ibid., 131.

[239] Ibid.

shell cat"[240] is a narrative mockery of her existential wish for femininity and change in relation to her husband and men in general.

The "wrong" cat maintains her role as "small" and "tight"[241]—like the wet cat under the table—and it teaches her the lesson that Jensine also had to confront; that she cannot overcome her surroundings, to whom a cat is just any cat, and who prefer to see her play her "appointed" role. But also, the woman's attempt to change her own life results in a change which is unpredictable and beyond her control and thus, "sticking to her last," she must accept her role in life—after all, "the padrone made her feel very small and *at the same time* really important" (italics mine).[242] As a result, the American girl can be said to succumb to her own subconscious resentment against complete emancipation.

The last story of my analytical focus is Peter Høeg's "Forsøg med kærlighedens varighed." Its introduction reveals a narrative purpose which is both self-contradictory and multiple. The story is introduced as an application of daily life on physics as well as "en advarsel mod en sådan operation [a warning against such an operation]."[243] At the same time, it is also about the life of the Gabel sisters from the perspective of men who loved them—and the introducing narrator is one of these—and a description of Charlotte Gabel's experiment with the durability of love, its consequences, and the resulting knowledge for her and her surroundings.

The Gabel sisters are characterized as existing in "et socialt kraftfelt … der var orienteret modsat af tyngdekraften [a social power field … which was oriented in the opposite direction of the laws of gravity]," [244] and it is suggested that the almost superhuman,

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[240] Hemingway, 131.

[241] Cf. ibid., 130.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Høeg, 117.

[244] Ibid., 119.

flowing ease of these women represents a law of nature in itself. Thus, the introductory warning and self-contradiction is addressed to, or caused by, the youngest daughter Charlotte's scientific approach to love. At an early age, she has discovered the ultimate, innermost meaning of life as being love and the sexual attraction between man and woman:

> En overvældende mængde af løfter gik i opfyldelse … hendes hånd mod drengen forbandt hende med tilværelsens inderste mening.
> Et øjeblik svævede hun i den absolutte lykke der forener dyb harmoni med det højeste alarmberedskab.[245]
>
> [An overwhelming amount of promises came true … her hand on the boy connected her with the innermost meaning of life.
> For a moment, she drifted in absolute happiness which unites deep harmony with the highest readiness for instant action.]

But, to Charlotte, this discovery also implies the understanding of love and happiness as spontaneous and temporary—when love reaches its highest, it is already on its way down, so to speak. Therefore, she develops a theory involving the decreasing strength of love and emotions over time which is, basically, Charlotte's universal rejection of life and lust. She establishes three hypotheses on the nature of love: 1) constant love only exists for a person who remains within his or her own closed system, 2) love is only strong the first time; then, it becomes weaker and weaker each time, 3) the only love worth striving for is durable love which is impossible, since any opening up of a closed system means its inevitable loss of energy.[246] Charlotte's assumptions are not only applicable to each human being, they also signify an idealization of the past because she argues that, historically as well, emotions have grown weaker over time. Thus, Charlotte is in search of an overall, universal pattern of energy containing a complete remembrance of its stronger emotions from the past.

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[245] Høeg, 125.

[246] Ibid., 129-130.

Throughout "Forsøg med kærlighedens varighed," Charlotte encounters Pierre, either by chance or because of his efforts to meet her. In many ways, this boy becomes Charlotte's fate, for—suffering from amnesia and thus, representing "en historieløs tilværelse her og nu [a history-less existence here and now]"[247]—he turns out to be the ideal "guinea-pig" for the physical experiment. The description of the experimental scene of remembrance and transformation is actually comical. After all, what the reader is witnessing is merely a life-renouncing woman who has previously escaped into theories of love and passion, but now experiences sexual pleasure for the first time:

> Umiddelbart inden lidenskaben lukkede sig om hende, indså hun, gurglende og begejstret, at hun havde haft ret, at den nutidige kærlighed var en skygge af den historiske, at følelserne henfalder, at hendes teorier i alle detaljer havde fundet deres bevis.[248]
>
> [Immediately before passion closed up around her, she realized, gargling and excited, that she had been right, that present love was a shadow of historical love, that feelings decrease, that her theories in every detail had found their proof.]

However, ironically, the scene demonstrates quite the opposite, making the actions and Charlotte's thoughts self-contradictory in the passage—how can she know that the love of the past is more intense than that of the present when she has only been with one man, in a multiple forum of mind-expansion backward to the past, but in a present time setting? By the end of the story, Pierre rejects Charlotte's theory and attempts to make her understand that "ved kærlighed vokser energien" and that "evighedsmaskinen … kan man nå i ét spring [by love, energy grows; the perpetual motion machine … can be reached in one single leap]."[249] Also, it is uncertain whether Pierre has actually been amnesiac at all. On the contrary, the

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[247] Høeg, 147.

[248] Ibid., 155.

[249] Ibid., 157.

sentence he writes to Charlotte on the night of the experiment indicates his calculating behavior:

> Så langt er der ingen der rejser for en kærlighed der henfalder.[250]
>
> [No one travels this long for a love that decreases.]

Thus, Charlotte's attempt to change her fate—and change the conditions of love for all humanity—not only fails, but also brings about a fatal, emotional change that she cannot control, neither rationally nor scientifically. But in Høeg's story, as in Dinesen's "En Historie om en Perle" and Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain," Charlotte is faced not so much with the inability to overcome her surroundings as with her *inner* struggle and inability to overcome *love*.

Once again, a protagonist must play her destined role, submitting to the irrational powers of some universal, archetypal pattern shaping the human existence. Common for the three women in my fourth category is the fact that they all possess an initial *expectation* in terms of existential definitions—a self-created myth, one could call it—which is then replaced with the complete opposite aspect by the end of each story. Jensine's serious, moral self-judgment becomes an indifference even more fearless than her husband. The American woman's androgynous perception of male and female values changes into a sharp distinction between masculinity and femininity. And Charlotte's rational rejection of love generates her irrational experience of its pleasures. It is also noteworthy that the attempts of these three women to change their fate or the conditions of life are negated by their own inner struggle. They doubt their own ideals, the nature of their emotions and in my view, it demonstrates an essential longing for something *finite*—an existential myth to form and guide their lives—which, however, cannot be obtained in the narrative forum of Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg's stories.

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[250] Høeg, 156.

CHAPTER 5
SUBSEQUENT REMARKS: MYTH AND THE ARTIST, HIS MISERY, HIS INSIGHT

I introduced my thesis by quoting Robert Langbaum's emphasis on Isak Dinesen's understanding of tradition and her ability to take the next step required by that tradition, namely a movement back to a universal principle. Langbaum defined this principle as the unconscious life of man and nature welling up in the human being as *myth*,[251] and there is no doubt that the central point in his quotation is Dinesen's reconciliation of tradition—a romantic, aristocratic heritage—with modernity's transience and dissolution of the individual's existential harmony.

Considering my analyses within this perspective, I posit that Ernest Hemingway and Peter Høeg also relate *their* narrative to a traditional origin which then develops into a modern conflict of existential futility and loss. Take for instance Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and "Cat in the Rain," expressing Macomber and the American woman's vain attempts to live up to myths of male courage and archetypal femininity, respectively, or the ironic submission of Henrik Blassermand's visionary ideas to the immortal *ricorso* of his aunt's life and music in Høeg's "Forholdsregler mod alderdommen."

However, Langbaum's reference to the sense of individuality as developed to the point of morbidity, but in Dinesen "led to where it wants to go" poses, in my view, some essential problems. First of all, Dinesen's individuality sense is presented as leading *back* toward a universal principle, the unconscious life of man and nature as myth. But the unconsciousness of the individuals in the stories that I have analyzed for this paper constitutes, in my opinion, an explicitly *modern* awareness, using the myth as a launching pad for a demonstration of the story's narrative inability to implement the myth and transcend its

[251] Cf. note 1.

nature into art. Secondly and consequently, the point of morbidity seems to me rather a point of *irony* and thus, goes a step further than Langbaum's quoted characterization of Dinesen's narrative reconciliation. This point of irony, then, leads the individuality not where it *wants* to go, but where it inevitably *must* go in Modernism, namely toward an awareness of the myth as a presumably lost principle in life, a distant idea of man's unconscious nature which is seemingly unattainable and thus, results in his unfulfilled longing and existential misery.

This interpretation of Langbaum's quotation and the narrative cognition, particularly in Dinesen, not only points to a critical affirmation of Hans Blumenberg's mythical views, but also questions *how* this supposed distance to myth has occurred, and whether the change in its status or presence in storytelling has happened simultaneously with its aesthetic incorporation into the modern work of art. Thus, in order to uncover how myth changes or weakens in the narrative representations of Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg, it is necessary, firstly, to define the precise meaning and significance of myth in the stories of my analytical focus. Secondly, the nature of the mythical pattern which I believe these stories to have shown must be determined. We are by now equipped with certain assumptions regarding these two points, based on my analyses which have produced their own interpretative results and essences, but also founded upon my introductory ideas as outlined above, together with the critical views as presented in my theoretical chapter. In this reverse order—my analytical interpretations followed by the points of my critical section—I will now sum up the mythical hypotheses and partial conclusions of this paper.

* * *

Summing up my analyses, "Den Udødelige Historie" presents the narrative focus of art and the artist, or rather, of a character's attempt to play God's role and re-create a myth in reality. The failure of Mr Clay's attempt signifies an affirmation of myth as the universal intention of God, but it also demonstrates that the immortal mythical story is not mimetically possible. Once told, it cannot happen, for the separation between God's myth and man's reality is the ironic result of man's fall. "Dykkeren" also deals with the self-awareness of the

story as a failed myth. Mira Jama's art of storytelling is destroyed when faced with its analogous realization in Saufe's life, and Saufe's own angel-myth is replaced with the ironic and indifferent maxims of the trunk fish. Thus, "Dykkeren" manifests an art evolving from life's misery more than from myth.

In my first analytical category, the quest for purification and salvation of humanity forms the antithesis to various aspects of depraved aristocratic virtues and contrived ideals. Compare for instance the false cardinal in Dinesen's "Syndfloden over Norderney," the hypocrisy of Høeg's Joseph K. as an aesthetic armorer in "Rejse ind i et mørkt hjerte," or Peroxide's illusory romance with Steve Ketchell in Hemingway's "The Light of the World." These lies and deceptions show the obvious *loss* of a mythical foundation in the forum of the stories. Old values such as aristocracy, truth, and human decency no longer fit into society which has become emotionally and existentially void. Instead, these values represent the last gathering before death in Dinesen, the last cultural debate before savage reality in Høeg, and humanity's last flickering light before a darkness of indifference and cruelty in Hemingway.

My second interpretative category concentrates on human and artistic achievement as a balance between divinity and fall. The artist functions as a symbolic figure whose aesthetic success also implies his destruction. Thus, Malli's fearless, Shakespearean staging of Ariel in Dinesen's "Storme" results in her "curse" of unhappiness and solitude. Francis Macomber reaches his ultimate, existential zenith of masculinity and courage in Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," but he pays for it with his life. In Høeg's "Hommage à Bournonville," Andreas succeeds as an artist and, for a brief moment, he even conquers death, but his artistic hope is destroyed by simple reality and primitive, human instincts.

My third analytical category verifies the recognition of artistic limitations as outlined in the first two categories. The attempt of the characters to change their fate results in their unforeseen transformation, but the dual exposure of good and evil, fear and carelessness, loss and achievement, suggests the necessity for the protagonists to *choose*

between playing their pre-ordained role, or breaking away from it. However, the constellation of opposites represents a pseudo-choice. In the double nature of the prioress/monkey, Boris and Athene are incapable of distinguishing good from evil. The visionary Henrik Blassermand cannot freely choose to ignore the artistic consequences of his aunt's immortality and representation of classical aesthetics. And Nick Adams's insight into the subhuman consciousness is beyond his control and involuntarily changes him. Characteristic of the transformation category is its thematic symbolization of a narrative wish for a different world order, or a return to the previous order—compare the ridicule and "fall" of the prioress/monkey in Dinesen's "Aben," the *ricorso* of Leonora's life and music in Høeg's "Forholdsregler mod alderdommen," and the presumable "battle" between good and evil in Bugs versus Ad Francis of Hemingway's "The Battler."

The fourth and last of my analytical categories represents a nuance of the former two. Again, the attempt of the figures to change their destiny generates an unforeseen change. Furthermore, the futile quest for *emancipation* plays a central role for both Jensine in Dinesen's "En Historie om en Perle," the American woman in Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain," and Høeg's Charlotte Gabel in "Forsøg med kærlighedens varighed." Jensine fails to "stick to her last" and marries an officer whose emancipated soul she does not understand. Thereby, her aunt's prophetic story about an inappropriate *liaison* invokes in Jensine her moral self-judgment which is the realization that her romantic ideas of a moral aristocracy have been replaced with an emotional indifference to the consequences of her lost ideals. The American woman's attempt to free herself from her androgynous role is likewise met with indifference and moreover, ridiculed by the delivery of the big, tortoise-shell cat which is a mock fulfillment of her wish for the "kitty." As for Charlotte Gabel, she seeks to liberate herself from desire and lust by means of a rational-scientific idealization of the past. However, her *inward* struggle between emancipation from and dependence on love results in her fatal succumbing to its very nature and thus, the story demonstrates an essential *doubt* regarding the archetypal significance of the past versus the passionate forces of the present.

* * *

During my analysis of the second category—that of events which radically change the course of the stories—I alluded to a certain psychological, progressive scheme which, as mentioned in my analytical chapter,[252] implies the assertion of the self followed by a fear of failure and leading to the attack on what threatens the successful self-assertion. This system belongs to the Hemingway-critic Jackson J. Benson who sub-divides Hemingway's stories under one category each,[253] but it is actually possible to apply the division to all three stories of my second category, viewing it as a developmental and determinist model which describes step one to three in a spiritual advance of the protagonists. Hereby, the following organization emerges:

In "Storme," Malli asserts herself as a savior and incarnation of Ariel, but, having experienced Ferdinand's death, she becomes afraid of her own fearlessness, of her inability to live up to her "divine" role, and of that role's staged nature. Her attack is really an avoidance of the events and people that threaten to cause her artistic fall. As Benson describes, "the targets for … attacks on those things which threaten the successful assertion of the self include parents and parental figures, certain kinds of women, marriage, Victorian morality, and competing writers."[254] As a result, Malli avoids marrying Arndt and leaves the guarding, parental Hosewinckel family, but not because she wants to according to an aggressive, Hemingway-esque attack; rather because she *must*, in order to complete her destiny.

As for Francis Macomber, he asserts his self by means of a successful hunting trip which manifests his status as masculine, virile, and brave. But his fear of failure actually comes *before* this self-assertion, during another hunting trip which is preliminary to the story

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[252] Cf. 52.

[253] Cf. Benson, 291.

[254] Ibid., 292.

and referred to as a description of Macomber's lack of courage, resulting in his cuckoldry and male humiliation. His counterattack on the threats to his newly gained status is simply his well-being and emotional strength which suggest to his wife and Wilson that he has taken control of the events and his own role therein. However, Macomber is shot and thus, represents another unfulfilled being confronting his destined limitations, a character denied even the brief enjoyment of existential satisfaction.

Andreas experiences *his* self-assertion through his artistic success as a dancer. His fear of failure becomes more like a *fact* of failure when his hope of love and reasons for dancing turn out to be illusions. Andreas's attack consists of tricking death and revenging himself on love as well as on art—after staging his own suicide, he returns to the scene, surprises the girl, and dances more beautifully than ever—but the narrative does not tolerate such an attempt to create the events, and the result is Andreas's isolation from artistic expression and thus, his existential suffering. Common for all three stories is that the attacks of the protagonists are unsuccessful because their fate is to confront their limitations and accept their role as (artistically) unredeemed human beings. Instead of existential satisfaction for the romantic or social injustice befallen them, they confront a life without hope and without myth.

Benson's figure is very reminiscent of Ide Hejlskov Larsen's three-step categorization of Peter Høeg's stories.[255] The latter's division into a unifying, a contradictory, and a separated view, elaborates on the former's systematization and adds the determinist perspective to Benson's psychological points of achievement. Thus, the initial self-assertion *unifies* the mythical ideal as a background for the stories whereas the fear of failure occurs along with a narrative which is *contradictory* to a mythical/artistic redemption—certain events in the plot simply remove the protagonist from his or her goal. A final *separation* of the man and his myth is the result of the myth-related failure and loss of the characters. Consequently, Benson's as well as Hejlskov Larsen's trial figures can be said to parallel

[255] Cf. note 94.

Northrop Frye's quest-myth when viewed as a *chronological* development, as mentioned in my theoretical chapter.[256] In that way, the unifying view corresponds to Frye's early, original modes of myth and romance which gather the narrative in a parabolic structure of archetypal mythology. The contradictory view matches the high or low mimetic modes in Frye's outline which give us the hero of most comedy and of realistic fiction, together with most epic and tragedy.[257] Frye notes that on these levels, "the difficulty in retaining the word 'hero,' occasionally strikes an author,"[258] and in my opinion, neither of the characters in Dinesen, Hemingway, or Høeg can be defined as heroes.

The final, separated view answers to Frye's ironic mode where the reader gets the sense of "looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity."[259] Man has been separated from his mythical origin, and it is Frye's point that "European fiction, during the last fifteen centuries, has steadily moved its center of gravity down the list."[260] The schemes of Benson and Hejlskov Larsen support this characterization by Frye, that mythical significance has undergone a chronological, developmental change *over time* in storytelling.

* * *

Having thus supplied a rough summary of the interpretative essences of my analyses, I will return to this chapter's articulated two errands: 1) the definition of the precise meaning and significance of myth, and 2) a determination of the nature of the mythical pattern. Concerning the first point, it is now possible to define the concept of myth as *both* an artistic quest for aesthetic redemption and fulfillment in the tales of Dinesen, Hemingway,

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[256] Cf. 27.

[257] Cf. Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 34.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

and Høeg, *and* an existential strive for immortality and unity with God for the narrative characters. Based on my analyses, the story, as well as the life of its figures, appears as a failed myth which is expressed through the mimetic failure of the narrative and the characters' mythical loss, their transformation away from an archetypal ideal, or their increasing, inner doubt about the status and significance of this ideal throughout the textual plot.

Therefore, the most important definition of the mythical idea is its close relation to the idea of art. This relationship explains the textual *transcendence* which I have continually alluded to in my thesis. The wish of the characters to transcend from nature into art in the stories, together with their subsequent realization of the impossibility of a similar transcendence between narrative reality and myth, represents a two-way figure which is to be understood *either* as the impossible "transcription" of a myth in the tale, *or* as the futile achievement of mythical status for the protagonists and their lives. In general, I ascribe the wish for transcendence to the basic two points on storytelling outlined by Northrop Frye. Man's universal mimetic tendency, together with the urge to tell stories about heroes who can do anything, represents the mythical aim for his narrative strive. Frye borrows this *cathartic* pattern from Aristotle's poetics, but he also explains the separation of myth/art from reality/nature by means of *religion*. Thus, Frye describes two notions of creation for the human being which is God's creation of nature versus man's ditto in humanized form. This separation is the same as Langbaum's division between God's will and man's consciousness, the result of his fall. Furthermore, Langbaum's emphasis on the *analogy* between life and art[261] and Frye's metaphorical identification between the myth and humanity/nature[262] both clearly suggest the hierarchical structure of two divided levels, the one representing the artistic expression and a mythical, existential origin, the other signifying the life of the characters and the reality of the narrative. Consequently, the conclusion of my analytical

[261] Cf. note 89.

[262] Cf. 20.

points on the meaning of myth seems to verify, firstly, that the more intense and authentic the mythical ideal in the text, the more considerable its artistic "fall" when confronting the narrative reality; secondly, the more archetypal an existential strive for the character, the more futile his quest for self-assertion and fulfillment.

Frye's concentration on the *quest-myth* as central in all literary interpretation is interesting in relation to Langbaum's claim that Dinesen's most present myth is the *myth of the fall*.[263] Indeed, it seems possible to place my entire analytical material within Frye's five-phased scheme—a linear development of creation, fall, exile, redemption, and restoration—because the quest-myth emphasizes the story's "imaginative status as an archetype,"[264] thus prioritizing myth to fact and placing the archetypal status over reality's ability to account for the narrative events. However, Frye's quest-myth proves applicable to the relevant stories of Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg merely by means of a *formal* mythical identification pattern in their tales—an ability to structure them in accordance with the existential development of the characters from creation to fall to restoration—whereas the *narrative* pattern is more complex to categorize. For example, Frye's own observation on the poem's relation to nature as in itself a *second* nature[265] suggests, in my view, the mimetic problem of re-creating ground myths in a modern narrative. Moreover, his admission of the poem's mirroring effect, reflecting art's own containing form and thus, constituting even a *third* aspect of representation, demonstrates in my opinion that Frye's quest-myth ends with the stages of fall or exile in modernity. Literary design has moved toward the *displacement* of myth as formulated by Frye, or a *reshaping* of its analogous, identifiable nature.

This reshaping is recognizable in Dinesen. In my introduction, I described her artistic project as that of "salvaging" the aesthetic foundation of a *bygone* world, transferring it

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[263] Cf. Langbaum, 51. On page 38 in my thesis, I explain Dinesen's concept of the myth of the fall and its consequential separation of man's consciousness from God's will.

[264] Cf. note 71.

[265] Cf. note 60.

into a *modern* representation.[266] I also argued in favor of a pattern in Dinesen's tales according to which the destinies of the characters seek to transcend from nature into art—from mere existence into an artistic, but marionette purpose. But as I suggested, the universality of myth itself—man's existential, mythical longing as the result of his fall, or in Langbaum's words, man's unconscious life *as myth*—transcends as well and takes on some other form, by means of its very *representation* in the work of art.

The critic Hans Holmberg characterizes the "divine," artistic goal of the being as a somewhat dated, Romantic view, and he also describes the purpose of Dinesen's characters as a *Platonic* apprehension of their destiny and role in the given world order. The art of myth represents the "true mirror" for their existential search in Dinesen's works,[267] but also for characters such as David Rehn and Henrik Blassermand in Høeg's stories. However, the search characterizing Hemingway's protagonists is not so clearly artistic as it is cognitive. His figures are mainly recorders seeking to unite with the origin and authenticity of man's physical and emotional nature, and to contemplate the co-existence and interaction with human society. Thus, answering my introductory question whether an explicitly artistic transcendence can be said to take place for Hemingway's "natural" human being,[268] the transcendental movement in his works must be characterized as *implicit* and directed toward the aesthetics of a character's *life*, rather than the aesthetics of the narrative *artistry*. James Phelan therefore notes in Scott Donaldson's *New Essays on "A Farewell to Arms"* that the textual paradox in Hemingway lies in his narrative situation which does not make *mimetic* sense, but does not destroy the mimetic illusion of the narrative either.[269]

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[266] Cf. 2.

[267] Cf. Holmberg, 115.

[268] Cf. 9.

[269] Cf. James Phelan, "Distance, Voice, and Temporal Perspective," in Donaldson, 66.

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Regarding the second point of my thematic discussion—a determination of the mythical pattern's nature—one of my main assumptions from the critical commentary of my thesis is that the concept of myth represents a possible unity, assembled from a narrative multiplicity and a constellation of opposites in the tales of my analytical focus. This assumption forms the intertextual basis of my comparison between Isak Dinesen, Ernest Hemingway, and Peter Høeg, and it is founded upon the observation of their complex, masked characters, multi-level plots, and narrative contrasts as key artifices of comprehension. However, in the context of the developmental figures of Jackson J. Benson and Ide Hejlskov Larsen, this mythical unity needs to be reconsidered in terms of a chronological progress, stretching from the *unification* of myth as the aesthetic foundation for storytelling, to its *contradiction* by means of the actions of the characters, together with the reality and advance of the textual plot, and to the inevitable *separation* of myth and the modern text as both the artistic and existential result of modern narratives.

Thus, an attempt to survey my entire analytical material as constituting Frye's ironic mode, Benson's attack on potential threats to the successful narrative self-assertion, and Hejlskov Larsen's separated view, results in the overall observation of elements which explicitly support the affiliation of the stories by Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg with these modern modes of irony, counterattacks, or views of separation. For example, some of Høeg's individuals—here, I am thinking of Andreas, Leonora Blassermand, and Charlotte Gabel—break the conventions of death and love in a dictating or even paranormal manner which indicates a "rebellious" perception of these archetypal values. Also, Høeg's narrative use of artifices such as surprise and suspension suggests, to quote Frye, "the subordination of moral attitude to the … story" (italics mine),[270] and this is evidently the reverse priority of conventional ideals of morality. Concerning another question posed in my introduction—

[270] Frye, Fables of Identity, 28.

whether Høeg's characters can be considered marionettes transcending from nature into art[271]—his figures are indeed Dinesen-esque marionettes, but it seems as if they are already "artists-in-life," artificial more than natural human beings who experience a transcendence of their own ideas of art to the narrative's artistic manifestations. Consider David Rehn and Andreas as well as Henrik Blassermand and Charlotte Gabel; all are initially equipped with individual artistic approaches—mathematical, choreographic, musical, or scientific skills—which, eventually, are transformed into, or replaced with, the paradigmatic pattern of the artwork of which they are a part.

As for Hemingway, his sparse, "cold-blooded" narrative functions as a *formal* way of rejecting or diminishing the mythical, metaphorical presence in his stories. However, I must disagree with Benson who describes Hemingway's style as a "modern, transparent eyeball," verifying his complete alienation from the past.[272] On the contrary, I detect a close relation to past, aristocratic ideals in Hemingway, as well as to the universal authenticity and archetypal, mythical foundation of human nature and thus, Hemingway's narration of the loss of traditional values in the Western world inevitable recalls and evaluates the *past* status and significance of these values.

In his review of Peter Høeg's *Fortællinger om natten*, Preben Meulengracht refers to his narrative as Dinesen-esque and classic in its definition of the "necessary" story, involving a storyteller who lends it truth. But Meulengracht also underlines the central artistic theme as what creates the existential *doubt* of the characters, simply because the narrator is changed by his own narration.[273] This meta-narrative transformation is an interesting aspect of the general, overall development of the mythical principle in the texts.

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[271] Cf. 9.

[272] Cf. Benson, 274.

[273] Cf. Preben Meulengracht, review of Fortællinger om natten, by Peter Høeg, in Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten (7 October 1990).

Consequently, the literary notion which in my view emerges from the critical points of my theory, together with the narrative substance of my interpretations, so evidently forms a *tragic* mythical pattern and reveals a paradigm of ironic *catharsis* for the characters in the stories, based on *misery* as the narrative way to insight. The unity with God's intention is impossible as a result of man's existential fall, but the *longing* for this unity is continually present in mankind, as an archetypal remnant and a distant awareness of some spiritual form which unanimously constitutes the tragedy as a modern, human condition. Moreover, the protagonist's distance to myth involves the story's distance to its artistic origin as well and thus, in the tales by Isak Dinesen, Ernest Hemingway, and Peter Høeg, we are facing an "impossible" art which evolves from the impossible unification with the myth as life's misery and the artwork's failure.

The tragic mythical pattern can be further elucidated by means of the Italian philosopher from the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century, Giambattista Vico. He has outlined man's mythical fall as a movement from *theocracy*, featuring God as the most powerful, spiritual authority, to *aristocracy*, placing legendary heroes and, later on, people of high rank at the top of its hierarchical, social structure, and eventually, to *democracy* in which human beings themselves represent the highest instance of spiritual knowledge, mythical power, and archetypal presence. Vico's developmental figure clarifies the human, mythical loss which is implied in a world totally governed by man's own, limited self and subsequently, the human strive for a return to the world of God illustrates a mythical *ricorso*, resembling the quest for artistic and existential redemption in the narrative of my analytical stories.

Therefore, Frye's universal principles of storytelling are still considered valid regarding the perception of art and aesthetics, and this is the exact essence of the *ricorso* and our tragedy. The modern artwork is incapable of mimetic re-creation of its mythical origin, but at the same time, it fails to produce or communicate a myth of its own. My pilot analysis of "Den Udødelige Historie" is an explicit example of this tragic, aesthetic awareness for both the narrative and its characters.

Relating again to Aristotle's idea of *catharsis*—as the artwork's invocation of fear and pity in the human being, leading to his redemption—one could argue that it has been replaced with an anti-*catharsis* in modernity, a demonstration of man's ironic destiny defined by aesthetics, instead of his mythical destiny defined by ethics. The *ricorso*, then—expressed in the textual wish for a different world order, or a return to the previous, mythical order—also involves the inner *doubt* of the characters. Initially in the stories, the figures fail to understand the loss of an archetypal significance of the past. Compare for instance Dinesen's Mr Clay and Saufe, Hemingway's Francis Macomber and the American woman in the Italian hotel, or Høeg's Henrik Blassermand and Charlotte Gabel—all attempt to control their destiny and create their own existence according to mythical ideals of truth, beauty, courage, femininity, righteousness, or rationality. Simultaneously, the mythical status in their lives is seriously questioned. Mr Clay and Saufe resign after failing to stage their myth in reality, Macomber and the American woman are mocked by the narrative because of their fatal, existential naiveté, and Henrik Blassermand and Charlotte Gabel are both overcome by the same emotional powers which they tried to resist.

The subsequent acceptance for the characters of their limited role and pre-ordained, myth-less destiny involves their loss of existential hope and thus, results in their tragic misery. But also the narrative succumbs to the mythical loss as a lack of artistic fulfillment. In Langbaum's words, "art is the back door to Eden,"[274] but this door remains shut in Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg's modern tales—myth as a symbolic reality, the exemplary model for all significant human action, no longer functions as the barometer for *la condition humaine*.

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A few more questions need to be answered, and a few more points need to be made. Regarding my theory, it is now obvious that Northrop Frye's suggestion to see

[274] Langbaum, 51.

literature as complicating itself in time, but also as spread out in conceptual space from some kind of center that criticism could locate,[275] has taken another direction of significance than his original intention. If this assumed center be myth, then literature has already moved far away from it, for myth no longer functions as an imaginative alleviation of man's existential misery, and it no longer represents a narrative consisting of the simple comparison between human action and absolute ethics: beauty, justice, or the good. What is left is an artist who still functions as the chosen one—in Dinesen as well as in Hemingway and Høeg—but he has been chosen with an *ironic* purpose, to communicate man's tragedy and the mythical loss. Thus, my thesis is unable to formulate a coherent idea of storytelling which is as sharp and fearless as Frye's criticism[276]—on the contrary, the notion is dissolved and fearful in relation to the significance and importance of myth in modern destiny tales. But have we, then, arrived at Hans Blumenberg's conclusion that everything has been explained and experienced, therefore myths *are* no more? I would like to reconsider the possibility of a mythical, artistic "salvation" of modernity by means of two points. First of all, Frye and Blumenberg both agree that the origin of myth lies in the human existence, and man still exists and continues to create literature and to tell stories. Secondly, Astradur Eysteinsson characterizes Modernism as dissolved to such an extent that it is now open to "something stricter," namely the use of myth as a way of controlling the modern, narrative chaos of too much reality and no transcendence[277]:

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[275] Cf. note 21.

[276] Cf. 9.

[277] Cf. Eysteinsson, 9.

> Modernism is viewed as a kind of aesthetic heroism, which in the face of the chaos of the modern world (very much a "fallen" world) sees art as the only dependable reality and as an ordering principle of a quasi-religious kind. The unity of art is supposedly a salvation from the shattered order of modern reality.[278]

Art as salvation implies, according to Eysteinsson, an a-historical notion of poetic autonomy and the perception of artistic expression as self-contained, generating its own laws.[279] I perceive this idea as a potentially mediating synthesis between Frye's thesis of myth as the structuring principle of all literature, and Blumenberg's antithesis of myth as dissolved and disappeared in modernity, present only as a distant, mythical desire.

However, in relation to this synthesizing view, it is important to distinguish between Dinesen's transcendence of *myth* into *reality*—by means of the staging of stories, playing of roles, and submission to the art form of the characters—and Eysteinsson's emphasis on the need for a transcendence of *reality*—the time-bound, fallen world—into *myth*, as a process of a-historical emancipation in Modernism. Subsequently, in *The Concept of Modernism*, Eysteinsson deals with how we collaborate with historical reality in modernity. He claims that the very definition of the term Modernism is its opposition to "tradition," but he also underlines that modern poetics, like tradition, is founded upon an aesthetic order and thus, represents a tradition itself. Therefore, it seems as if tradition and history signify the nightmare from which we are trying to escape in modernity—like Stephen Dedalus of James Joyce's *Ulysses*—and as if the new aesthetic order of myth, then, represents an a-historical strive for unity.

The new combination of myth and autonomous art is expressed in Eysteinsson's paraphrase of T. S. Eliot who states that "the distinctive quality of a poetic sensibility is its capacity to form *new* wholes, to fuse seemingly disparate experiences into an organic unity"

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[278] Eysteinsson, 9.

[279] Cf. ibid., 12 and 13.

(italics mine).[280] Thus, the new unity constitutes Eysteinsson's locking of past and present in a time-less condition, consisting of "a transformation of the historical imagination into myth."[281] It also signifies Maurice Beebe's definitions of Modernism—in Eysteinsson's paraphrase—as combining the four features: aesthetic autonomy, noncommitment and irony, the use of myth as a structuring device, and the centering of art upon its own creation and composition.[282] In this constellation of figures, we have the myth constituents of old along with modern ideas of irony and artistic autonomy. And, finally, the new unity represents Eysteinsson's remarks in his footnote on Eliot:

> Eliot … is actually not at all interested in the interpretive implications of mythological parallels and allusions. He is mainly concerned with securing a structural grid on which to latch the work that can find no such coherent structural means in the chaos of modern history. Hence, myth comes to serve as an aesthetic substitute for the "lost" whole of historical reality.[283]

According to the quote, a coherent, structural means is no longer to be found in the artwork, due to the slide of modern history *away* from a mythical, referential context. Consequently, the work of art, as well as the artist, has been forced *outside* of history by means of the discontinuance of myth. Eysteinsson states that the narrative focus has moved toward an abstract world of ideas which is emptied of concrete meaning and real consequences for our external lives and thus, impossible to interpret or change in our reality.[284] I do not entirely agree with this interpretative statement in relation to my analytical stories. First of all, Robert Langbaum claims that Dinesen connects the universal principle of myth with the external

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[280] Eysteinsson, 10.

[281] Ibid.

[282] Cf. ibid.

[283] Ibid., 11.

[284] Cf. ibid., 13-14.

world[285] and secondly, both Hemingway and Høeg's realistic fiction seems founded upon *life* rather than *art*.

Otherwise, the narrative verdict of Modernism is clear: without a coherent, myth-related structure, we are resigned to the subsequent status of art as "a thing of no consequence."[286]

[285] Cf. note 1.

[286] Eysteinsson, 14.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION: UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERN

It is not so surprising that one of the main points of my thesis has turned out to be the narrative *tragedy* of both art and its subjects, the fictional characters, in the works of my analytical focus. From the outset, we have known the *longing* of Isak Dinesen's protagonists for a unity with God and artistic creation—and at the same time, we have understood the *futility* of this longing as the paradigmatic *fate* of her marionettes or figures, their destiny being the acceptance of their pre-ordained role and separation from God and art. Furthermore, we have seen this pattern repeated in both Peter Høeg and Ernest Hemingway; in the works of the former as an updated version of Dinesen's traditional narrative points about stories which cannot happen and myths which cannot be reached and lived; in the latter's writings as a cognitive process and the futile search for existential authenticity and a "natural aristocracy" of the human being.

Also theoretically, the point of human tragedy has been made, in Northrop Frye's criticism by means of the mythical *displacement*, in Hans Blumenberg's theoretical ideas as a present, mythical *desire* for the unity which has been lost. Therefore, it is not so much the *tragic* that predominates the conclusion of my thesis as it is the theoretical as well as narrative *inability to systematize* a mythical origin as an overall valid and significant, abstract pattern for the texts. We are, so to speak, left solely to our own modern, concrete reality. But if the mythical subject matter is thus extracted from a dried-out source, how is it revitalized in Modernism?

As mentioned earlier, I wish to reconsider the possibility of a mythical, artistic "salvation" of modernity, but if myths cannot transcend, and if artistry cannot be derived from banal reality—compare Mira Jama's statement in Dinesen's "Dykkeren," that the work of the artist is illness transformed into beauty[287]—then how can stories ever again be told to

[287] Cf. note 116.

make us happier and wiser? How can we ever again complete our mimetic tendency and reach *catharsis* by means of stories about heroes who can do anything?

The reclaiming of universality for Frye's quest-myth, as the loss and regaining of identity, may find its support in Eysteinsson's synthesizing point about a *new* unity of myth as a means of organizing the historical chaos of Modernism. In relation to cognition and knowledge, myth is an *abstract* concept, but it is *historical* regarding literary history and its narrative role therein. In Dinesen, Hemingway, and Høeg's tales, myth represents the *ideal* of an action which the characters strive to imitate and achieve. But the stories as such are part of a movement in literary history *away* from the significance of myth as a universal, mimetic, and artistic purpose.

Thus, the possibility in modernity for myth to form a *new* unity involves a balance between the continual awareness of a mythical past and a critical consciousness regarding the myth-less present, as well as a rehabilitation of the imagery and metaphors of artistic creation. In contrast to the three writers of my analytical focus, myth should no longer be perceived as *analogous* to our lives, an ideal which is to be directly transcended from art into life. It should be seen as an artistic *parallel* to our existence, namely a mimetic parallel of aesthetic as well as ethical relevance, which we can admire *before* knowing why, even admire without *ever* knowing why.

In our modern world deprived of illusions and ideals, we need the myth *exactly* as myth; as a structural unity for storytelling and a background pattern for literary history, *not* as futile ideal for human existence, the imaginative, unattainable goal for our existential quest. And thus, Northrop Frye gets the last word of my thesis, for "the poem is not itself a mirror. It does not merely reproduce a shadow of nature; it causes nature to be reflected in its containing form."[288]

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[288] Cf. note 61.

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