

GENDERING DISSENT: #METOO TRAVELS TO SCANDINAVIA IN THE EARLY TWENTY- FIRST CENTURY

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Abstract

In May 2018, the #MeToo movement picked up wind when Harvey Weinstein was charged by the New York County District Attorney's Office with rape and sexual misconduct. But #MeToo was slow to take hold in Scandinavia, specifically in Denmark, where the consensus seemed to be that inequality and sexual harassment had long been overcome. Both the Women's March, which Ralph Young includes in *Dissent: The History of an American Idea* (2015), and the belated #MeToo movement in Denmark demonstrate the importance of American dissent, though the American Studies community has ignored national differences within #MeToo. Taken together, #MeToo protests in the United States set in motion a fourth wave of Americanization in Scandinavia, though the movement changed as it traveled across the Atlantic. Recent examples from Danish media and monographs suggest that the local #MeToo movement focused on the men involved and on class and the Danish Welfare State, which might topple if trade unionists did not take sexual violence seriously. Even the royal family would ultimately feel the sting of #MeToo and its relentless demand for equality.

Keywords: #MeToo; dissent; Americanization; masculinity; class; Denmark

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Introduction

On May 25, 2018, the #MeToo protests intensified when movie mogul Harvey Weinstein was charged by the New York County District Attorney's Office with rape and sexual misconduct of various kinds. Tarana Burke, a New York activist for women's rights, had launched the movement in 2006 on social media with the MeToo phrase, hoping to empower victims of sexual violence by sharing her own story of sexual harassment and letting other victims know that they were not alone. In a 2017 *New York Times* article, actors Ashley Judd and Rose McGowan had accused the powerful Hollywood producer of sexual misconduct, and on October 15, actor Alyssa Milano asked other survivors of sexual assault to come forward in a now famous tweet: "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet."¹ The responses flooded in, and over the following weeks, #MeToo became a popular hashtag for those maintaining that sexual violence was the rule, rather than the exception, for millions of women and many men as well. In the wake of the #MeToo movement, powerful men were accused, and some criminally charged, like the frail-looking Harvey Weinstein hunched over a walker entering the New York City courtroom, where he was sentenced to twenty-three years in prison on March 11, 2020.²

The election of Donald J. Trump and his blatantly unapologetic misogyny had already lit the fire among activists for gender equality. On January 21, 2017, the day after the inauguration of the 45th President of the United States, the Women's March made visible women and their sympathizers' dissatisfaction with the election of this new president, and sexual abuse in general. Demonstrators with pink hats and inventive signs marched against gender discrimination and violation from Africa to Antarctica, from Cape Town to Copenhagen. The struggle for gender equality was on, again, and had joined other radical movements focused on dissent, defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary* as "a strong difference of opinion on a particular subject, especially about an official suggestion

¹ Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, "Harvey Weinstein Paid off Accusers for Decades," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/us/harvey-weinstein-harassment-allegations.html>; Alyssa Milano (@Alyssa_Milano), Twitter, October 15, 2017, https://twitter.com/alyssa_milano/status/919659438700670976?lang=en.

² "Full Coverage: Harvey Weinstein Found Guilty of Rape," *The New York Times*, February 24, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/24/nyregion/harvey-weinstein-verdict.html>; Colin Dwyer, "The Harvey Weinstein Trial: A Brief Timeline of How We Got Here," *NPR*, January 22, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/22/798222176/the-harvey-weinstein-trial-a-brief-timeline-of-how-we-got-here>.

or plan or a popular belief.”³ The demonstrators protested patriarchal privilege, which shielded powerful predators from consequences, legal and otherwise, of their crimes. In his introduction to the paperback edition of *Dissent: The History of an American Idea* (2015), Ralph Young includes “Reflections on the Women’s March,” which he observed as a recent manifestation of American dissent.⁴ As he watched the many imaginative signs of the protesters nationwide, Young “was struck again by the essential truth that democracy in America didn’t just happen; it was fought for.”⁵ The Women’s March and the #MeToo activists expressed dissent in terms of sexuality and gender, which also the publications on the US #MeToo movement highlight. The dissenters sought to call out predators, cozily enmeshed in patriarchy, the social and ideological belief system that enables men to control, dominate and exploit women.

This article aims to demonstrate that despite the continuing problems in Trumpland, the #MeToo movement began a fourth wave of Americanization, starting with Weinstein and Trump and the widespread dissent they (and their allies) inspired. But when the #MeToo movement reached new transatlantic contexts and audiences, ideologies and protests did not follow the same path as in the US. Both the global Women’s March and the local #MeToo movement in Scandinavia indicate the importance of American dissent, but the configuration, the time frame and the mood of these US-inspired protests changed as they crossed the Atlantic Ocean. The #MeToo movement was slow to take hold in Denmark. In August 2020, however, this initial complacency changed and a #MeToo 2.0 began, prompted by a well-known TV host. Soon the heads of prominent politicians and media celebrities began to roll. As in US protest movements such as Black Lives Matter, the focus eventually shifted from individual transgressions to a more general approach. In Denmark, #MeToo activism also led to discussions of systemic sexism within educational institutions, local and state politics, health-care facilities, and the media. But to a higher degree than in the US, attention focused on the plight of men, and on class as an important ingredient in discussions of gender and sex.

The theoretical foundation for the analysis of #MeToo in Scandinavia will be the concept of Americanization, the notion of US influence outside its own borders, and Edward Said’s influential “Traveling Theory” (1982), which traces the

³ “Dissent,” *Cambridge Dictionary* (online), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dissent>.

⁴ Ralph Young, *Dissent: The History of an American Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), xii–xiv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xiii.

changes a theory or an ideology – a protest – might undergo as it takes off from its original setting or framework. After introducing the theoretical underpinnings for analyzing the arrival of #MeToo in Denmark in sections titled “Americanization” and “Traveling with #MeToo,” the next section, “Writing (about) #MeToo,” will cover significant literature about the movement and its main figures, published on both sides of the Atlantic. “You Know Who You Are” introduces #MeToo from its sluggish start in Denmark to #MeToo 2.0, when all hell broke loose for the powerful – usually male – predators, who from prestigious positions in Danish society had been on the prowl for decades. The section “Big Boys Fall” traces their demise in various Danish institutions, while others scramble to fit the New Normal of gender relations, as described in the “Appropriating #MeToo” part of this analysis. But the Big Boys also prepare a come-back to power, as the section “Big Boys Fight Back” will show. With the gender struggle on, writers such as Kristina Nya Glaffey enter the boxing ring in “Those Modern Men,” and Glaffey finds in her corner also an Ex-Prime Minister and young trade unionists, who bring to the gender equation the concept of class and the future of Danish welfare, as the “#MeToo and Class” section explains. Based on recent revelations about abuse in an elite boarding school, Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary find themselves in a dilemma and must take sides, since also royals meet with a public demand for equality. “Of Gender and Gaps” discusses the World Economic Forum’s *Global Gender Gap Report* and takes a quick trip across Øresund to Sweden, where #MeToo brought even more havoc. The final section, “In/Conclusions” suggests that #MeToo in Denmark is on-going, and that predators hide in bright daylight as well as in darker corners. Overall, the article finds that masculinities – victimized or predatory – take up more space in the Danish variant of #MeToo than in its point of origin, and that class becomes a more important ingredient in #MeToo in the Danish Welfare State than in the US. But #MeToo also revives the Americanization of Danish society and ideas and thus splashes into the fourth wave of superpower impact that flows across Europe.

Americanization

#MeToo would have enough back wind to arrive in Scandinavia and revive American influence, which had waned because of issues and developments that alienated the public in the Nordic countries: Trumpism, guns and mass shootings, election denials, vaccine hesitancy, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more. Historian Nils Arne Sørensen notes in *Det amerikanske Forbillede* [The American

Role Model] (2011) that the term “Americanization” comes with heavy historical baggage and numerous meanings, but he still finds a scholarly consensus in defining the word as “a transfer of American goods, knowledge, values and norms, technologies, organizational structures and institutions to other countries.”⁶ Building on the Norway-based economic historian Harm Schröter, Sørensen identifies three waves of Americanization, which he sees as the most significant transatlantic phenomenon ever. The first wave culminated in the 1920s but lost its momentum when the Great Depression set in with the stock market crash in 1929. The second wave rolled in the 1945–70 period, with the US coming victoriously out of WWII as the only nation with a prosperous economy. During the Cold War, the US consolidated its power as its economic, political, and cultural influence became intertwined. Political and economic disruptions – the Vietnam War and protests among them – caused the second wave to ebb, but the Reagan years renewed the US economic and political momentum and prepared the third wave of Americanization, which lasted into the early 1990s.⁷ Though Americanization was cornered by globalization discussions in the decades before and after the Millennium, German and European History professor Volker Berghahn sees the concept of globalization as a continuation of Americanization due to innovations in bio- and information technologies, especially on the West Coast, and inventive measures in the financial world of the East Coast.⁸ The scholarly community to which Sørensen and Berghahn belong explains the end of the third wave of Americanization with the US decline as a superpower during the second Bush Administration and the financial crisis from 2007–08.⁹ But a fourth wave began with Donald J. Trump and the unrepentant sexism of the 45th President of the United States and his allies, which energized dissent also outside US borders. This time, the wave rolled from Hollywood and actors who called out Weinstein to international communities of women and their supporters. Unlike Vietnam War protests, this fourth-wave dissent was gendered, as demonstrators in pink hats took on sexual predators in board rooms, institutions, media, and politics. The fourth-wave feminist movement had shown the way with its access to social

⁶ Nils Arne Sørensen, *Det amerikanske Forbillede: Dansk erhvervsliv og USA, ca. 1920–1970* [The American Role Model: Danish Business and the US, approx. 1920–1970] (Odense; University of Southern Denmark Press, 2011), 9, translated from the Danish by the author of this article.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

⁸ Volker R. Berghahn, “The Debate on ‘Americanization’ among Economic and Cultural Historians,” *Cold War History* 10, no. 1 (2010), 120–121, doi: 10.1080/14682740903388566.

⁹ Sørensen, 10–12.

media and its emphasis on intersectional empowerment for marginalized groups of all colors and genders.¹⁰

Traveling with #MeToo

In “Traveling Theory” (1982), Edward Said investigates the transfer of ideas and theories from one person to another, from one era to another, and from one geographical location to another. His focus was literary theory, but his argument might equally well apply to social and cultural movements such as #MeToo. In his important essay, Said argues that movement from one setting to another is never unobstructed, since representational codes and institutions will differ from the point of origin. Nonetheless, he identifies four characteristic stages in the travel of ideas from one geographical or ideological context to another. First is the set of circumstances that sparked the idea, in the case of #MeToo Tarana Burke’s internet initiative and the Hollywood actors who took on Weinstein and co. Second, Said mentions the “distance traversed,” the various pressures and changes that the idea encounters as it relocates from one setting to another. One such change might be the media coverage of #MeToo as it moves into a global context and enters new discourses. In the third stage, the transplanted idea meets “conditions of acceptance,” or, inevitably, resistances, which accompany its introduction, acceptance, or “toleration” in a different culture. In the Danish context, #MeToo first confronted the widespread belief that gender relations in this Nordic country needed no help from outside influences, since women had already entered a fair and welcoming job market and men, unlike their fathers, were engaged in housework, childcare, and other domestic duties. In Said’s fourth stage, the fully or partly adjusted idea is somewhat transformed in the new surroundings with new users, as was the case when #MeToo finally arrived in the seemingly egalitarian Danish society.¹¹ In a country officially committed to gender equality and with an employment rate for women between 16 and 64 at 76 per cent in 2019, the consensus seemed at first to be that inequality and sexual harassment had long been overcome, or that Danish broad-mindedness in sexual matters legitimized certain transgressions.

¹⁰ For an introduction to fourth-wave feminism, see for ex. Nicola Rivers, *Post-feminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹¹ Edward W. Said, “Traveling Theory” (1982), reprinted in *World Literature in Theory*, ed. David Damrosch (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 115.

Writing (about) #MeToo

Innumerable books and articles have now exposed sexual predators and analyzed the #MeToo movement in an American context. Ronan Farrow took on the media world with *Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators* (2019), which became a New York Times bestseller and declared the NPR Favorite Book of 2019, the Washington Post Best Nonfiction Book of 2019, and the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune Best Book of 2019.¹² Farrow exposes the predatory, controlling behavior of influential men in media and charts his own exposé of Harvey Weinstein that led to his article in the October 23, 2017 issue of *The New Yorker*, “From Aggressive Overtures to Sexual Assault: Harvey Weinstein’s Accusers Tell Their Stories.”¹³ Another prominent #MeToo publication and also a *New York Times* bestseller appeared with *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement* (2020) by the Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporters Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey.¹⁴ As a companion piece to Farrow’s book, *She Said* exposes Weinstein through often reluctant or circumspect victims or survivors, and it takes on the systems that legitimized men like him. *The Education of Brett Kavanaugh: An Investigation* (2019) showcased #MeToo issues in the world of law, at a time when protesters sided with Dr. Christine Blasey Ford, who accused Kavanaugh of attempted rape when they were both teenagers and testified against him during the congressional hearings on his Supreme Court nomination in September 2018.¹⁵ At the hearing, Kavanaugh performed a specific kind of hegemonic masculinity – rhetorically, visually, and affectively – that again brought issues of sexual abuse to the forefront.

Within the literary and cultural establishment, the #MeToo movement has prompted reconsiderations of canonical American writers, with Vladimir Nabokov and Philip Roth among the most prominent examples, and of American movies and TV series, Kevin Spacey only one among many Hollywood actors blacklisted in the wake of #MeToo. Confessional autobiographies and

¹² Ronan Farrow, *Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators* (London: Fleet, 2019).

¹³ Ronan Farrow, “From Aggressive Overtures to Sexual Assault: Harvey Weinstein’s Accusers Tell Their Stories,” *The New Yorker*, October 10, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/from-aggressive-overtures-to-sexual-assault-harvey-weinsteins-accusers-tell-their-stories>.

¹⁴ Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement* (New York: Penguin, 2020).

¹⁵ Robin Pogrebin and Kate Kelly, *The Education of Brett Kavanaugh: An Investigation* (London: Portfolio, 2019).

essays followed, such as Tarana Burke's *Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement* (2021) and Laura Gray-Rosendale's anthology *Me Too, Feminist Theory, and Surviving Sexual Violence in the Academy* (2020), which, as the title suggests, blows feminist theory and higher education into the #MeToo storm.¹⁶ American Studies scholars in Scandinavia have published on #MeToo developments in the US, for example with articles by the present author on Philip Roth (and his biographer) and the Kavanaugh Supreme Court nomination hearings. But so far, the American Studies community has not explored the differences between the American and the Scandinavian #MeToo responses.¹⁷

With the delayed #MeToo reaction in the country, scholarly interpretations of the Danish #MeToo situation got off to a slow start. Somewhat surprising to local feminists, Professor of Gender Studies at Roskilde University, Kenneth Reinicke, opened discussions with the first academic monograph on #MeToo, *Mænd der krænker kvinder: Refleksioner i kølvandet på #MeToo* [Men Who Violate Women: Reflections in the Wake of #Me Too] (2018).¹⁸ Primarily interested in masculinity studies, Reinicke zoomed in on men and their reactions to #MeToo, with media appearances following his publication. He stresses the need not to demonize men, not to go on a witch-hunt, and he mentions that men may find themselves in worse positions or situations than women. He also mentions a suicide in the wake of #MeToo, but overall, he sides with the violated women, against the few male predators.¹⁹ He criticizes the masculine resistance to problematizing predatory behaviors and points to men's blind spots. In his book, women are victims, with no agency. Recently, Reinicke has re-entered #MeToo discussions with *Men After #MeToo: Being an Ally in the Fight Against Sexual Harassment* (2022).²⁰ Through interviews with twenty-five Danish men,

¹⁶ Tarana Burke, *Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement* (New York: Flatiron, 2021); Laura Gray-Rosendale, ed., *Me Too, Feminist Theory, and Surviving Sexual Violence in the Academy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020).

¹⁷ See Clara Juncker and Marianne Kongerslev, "Tårer i Rovdyrenes Klub: Hvide Følelser og Maskulinitetsmyter i Trumpland" [Tears in the Predators' Club: White Emotions and Masculinity Myths in Trumpland], *Økonomi & Politik* 92, no. 1 (2019): 56–66; and Clara Juncker, "Teaching Philip Roth in Denmark: It's Complicated," in *Contemporary American Fiction in the European Classroom: Teaching and Texts*, ed. Lawrence Mazzeno and Sue Norton (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 185–200.

¹⁸ Kenneth Reinicke, *Mænd der krænker kvinder: Refleksioner i kølvandet på #MeToo* (Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, 2018).

¹⁹ Reinicke, *Mænd der krænker*, 73, 190.

²⁰ Kenneth Reinicke, *Men After #MeToo: Being an Ally in the Fight Against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Springer Nature, 2022).

he examines men's socialization processes and discusses how men might combat sexual harassment, not only by refraining from predatory behaviors but also as empowered bystanders. His male-focused approach to #MeToo debates has provoked considerable criticism, not least in Kristina Nya Glaffey's *To the Modern Man: A Portrait* (2022), a vitriolic attack on male feminists and their smug navigations in #MeToo terrain, inspired by a primary interest in themselves.²¹

“You Know Who You Are”

At first, the fourth wave of Americanization in Denmark did not cause a tidal surge, though it began, as in the US, in the entertainment industry. The Danish reaction to American #MeToo revelations hit headlines in November 2017, when actor Dorte Rømer joined her Hollywood colleagues by sharing her experiences of sexual harassment in the Danish film business. More actresses joined in, and on November 13, the President of the Danish Actors' Guild, Katja Holm, stated that she found it depressing and grotesque that people use their power to harass others.²² By then, 241 members of the Actors' Guild had told to the Danish newspaper *Politiken* that they had been harassed by their bosses.²³ Subsequently, Minister of Equality Karen Ellemann and Minister of Culture Mette Bock wrote an open letter to the culture industry, in which they admonished the recipients to take this problem seriously and change a work environment characterized by secrecy and taboos.²⁴ Peter Aalbæk, founder, producer and owner of Zentropa, where the famous Dogme 95 movement resulted in film successes such as *Festen* (1996, Eng. *The Celebration* 1998), remained unapologetic. He had allegedly humiliated female employees with cigar parties, butt-slapping, nude swimming and strip competitions, accusations that resulted in his exclusion from board meetings and teaching. Two years later, he was still at Zentropa and declared:

²¹ Kristina Nya Glaffey, *To the Modern Man* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2022).

²² Martine Stock, “MeToo (#MeToo),” *Faktalink*, January 18, 2018, https://beta.bibliotek.dk/en/materiale/metoo-metoo-_martine-stock/work-of%3A870971-faktalink%3A37697451?type=artikel.

²³ Torben Benner, “Mange kvindelige skuespillere har oplevet sex-chikane,” *Politiken*, November 12, 2017, <https://politiken.dk/kultur/art6203209/Mange-kvindelige-skuespillere-har-oplevet-sexchikane-fra-chefer>.

²⁴ Karen Ellemann and Mette Bock, “Åbent brev til Kulturbranchen fra ligestillingsminister Karen Ellemann og Mette Bock,” Facebook, November 21, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/karen.ellemann/photos/%C3%A5bent-brev-til-kulturbranchen-fra-ligestillingsminister-karen-ellemann-og-kultur/1843361782359844/>.

“I have humiliated my students, but almost everyone got back up and stronger as well. I apologize for nothing and regret nothing.”²⁵

But in August 2020, the Danish #MeToo complacency came to an end. TV-host Sophie Linde took the stage at the annual Zulu Comedy Gala and told, in graphic details, a stunned audience about the sexual harassment she had experienced as a newly hired 18-year-old intern at the Danish National TV station, DR. A prominent TV personality had taken her aside and threatened to ruin her career if she did not deliver the sexual act he asked for. “I am pretty sure you are watching me now,” she said, and “You know who you are.”²⁶ Though Linde’s speech was not appreciated by all members of the audience and beyond, 615 women in Danish media soon signed a declaration of support for her views, and her courage.²⁷ #MeToo 2.0 had begun, and heads began to roll. The fourth wave of Americanization had reached Denmark, and local versions of the Harvey Weinstein narrative washed in. As Said theorizes, the passage across the Atlantic resulted in certain changes, discernible in a gentler tone overall and maybe less violent – but still unacceptable – transgressions, though at least one completed rape allegedly took place.

Big Boys Fall

The first head to fall belonged to prominent politician Morten Østergaard, the leader of the Radical Left, despite its name a centrist political party with liberal views on equality and women’s rights. Following weeks of denial, false claims of innocence and promises of an investigation within party ranks, Østergaard admitted that he himself had violated Member of Parliament Lotte Rod by placing a hand on her leg ten years previously. He confessed to this transgression after a crisis meeting on October 7, 2020, at the Black Diamond Library. On October 10, Østergaard admitted on Facebook that more women had suffered his indiscretions, and an investigation of Østergaard, his party behaviors, and

²⁵ Anders Højberg Kamp, “Peter Aalbæk to år efter sexchikane-sag: Jeg undskylder intet og fortryder intet,” *B.T.*, December 21, 2019, <https://www.bt.dk/kendte/peter-aalbaek-to-aar-efter-sexchikane-sag-jeg-undskylder-intet-og-fortryder-intet>.

²⁶ TV2Nyhederne, “Sofie Linde deler MeToo-øjeblik: – Du ved godt, hvem du er,” Facebook, August 27, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/tv2nyhederne/videos/sofie-linde-deler-metoo-%C3%B8jeblik-du-ved-godt-hvem-du-er/354739329257691/>.

²⁷ Ritzau, “1615 har skrevet under på Sofie Linde-brev om sexismen,” *Jyllands-Posten*, September 12, 2020, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/kultur/ECE12409711/1615-har-skrevet-under-paa-sofie-lindebrev-om-sexisme/>.

the sexual culture in the Radical Left began.²⁸ Next came Frank Jensen, Lord Mayor of Copenhagen and a prominent Vice Chair of the Social Democratic Party, who was forced to step down and give up all his posts on October 19, 2020. Several women, including 30-year-old Maria Gudme, also a Social Democrat and a member of the Copenhagen regional council, went public with a series of sexual violation accusations against the then 59-year-old Jensen. Most memorable among his wrongdoings were perhaps his habit of licking women's ears or necks and his come-ons towards pregnant women at Christmas parties.²⁹

In Nyborg, a provincial town on the island of Funen, a whistleblower zoomed in on Vice County Director Søren Møllegård and his behavior at a December 3, 2021, Christmas Party. Details surfaced about female managers and chairs being French-kissed against their will, non-consensual touching, and some partygoers wearing signs saying “violated” and “not violated.” Apparently, these incidents were only the tip of the iceberg in Møllegård's career and at Nyborg City Council. Møllegård was fired a few days later, and HR Chief Manager Lars Svenningsen took a sudden, stress-related sick leave. Yet in late April 2022, Danish news media revealed that Jesper Nielsen, a council member for the Social Democrats in Nyborg, had tried to buy nude photos from a local 17-year-old minor, Chelsea. Newspapers and websites brought his Snapchat correspondence: “Are you interested in selling nude pictures?” he wrote to Chelsea, a student at a local high school. “Or could we meet one day and talk about it? I also know a good photographer in case you want to have some great pictures taken.” On April 27, after a crisis meeting with only his behavior on the agenda, Nielsen was relieved of all his posts and expelled from the City Council, undoubtedly due to the new zero-tolerance policy on sexual transgressions in many Danish institutions and workplaces. The following day, Funen police decided to investigate.³⁰

The new #MeToo wave also hit Jesper Nielsen's namesake, a celebrity TV realtor selling upscale properties in fashionable Copenhagen neighborhoods, who was fired from his own firm, Jesper Nielsen Realty, allegedly for predatory behavior during a Christmas lunch at the high-class Hotel d'Angleterre

²⁸ The Editors, “Politikere står frem med vidnesbyrd: ‘Han ville mere, så da hun sov, penetrerede han hende,’” *Alt.*, September 26, 2020, <https://www.alt.dk/artikler/politikere-laeger-og-journalister-om-sexisme>.

²⁹ Lærke Sofie Bonke, “Mistet overblikket? Her er en tidslinje over Frank Jensens krænkelsessager,” *Alt.*, October 27, 2020, <https://www.alt.dk/artikler/frank-jensen-og-sexisme-den-fulde-oversigt>.

³⁰ Peter Bergman, “Politiker afsløret: – Vil du sælge nøgenbilleder?” *Avisen.dk*, April 27, 2022, https://www.avisen.dk/politiker-afsloret-vil-du-saelge-noegenbilleder_689665.aspx.

the previous December.³¹ In March 2022, a top (female) manager in 3F, with its 260,000+ working-class members the most influential trade union in Denmark, took a leave of absence and was relieved of all political duties after a male employee had reported her to the acting chair of the 3F Union.³² On April 19, 2022, Michael Bojesen, renowned composer and former director of the Danish National Girls' Choir, then Director of the Malmø Opera and Theater Division, was fired immediately after a Danish newspaper published an email from the already-tainted choir director about a talented young singer: "She sang in the DR Girls' Choir and I know her fine. She has developed quite wildly as a singer – and apparently has nipples, but no breasts with which to back them up."³³ More Big Boys, mostly men, were axed between August 2020 and the present than can be discussed here.

In a turn from individual predators to toxic work cultures, revelations about sexism and sexual transgressions unnerved Danish institutions. Christiansborg, the Danish Parliament, had 322 women complain of sexual violations – from one completed rape (so much for gentler transgressions) to condescending behavior and verbal and physical abuse.³⁴ Hundreds of medical doctors signed a statement about sexism at Danish hospital wards and clinics,³⁵ and 1600 women complained of gender discrimination and encroachments in the media world, followed by the departure of two prominent anchors at the second-largest

³¹ Peter Bugge, "Medie: Derfor blev Jesper Nielsen fyret," *Avisen.dk*, June 17, 2022, https://www.avisen.dk/medie-derfor-blev-jesper-nielsen-fyret_695679.aspx.

³² Jonathan Lundgren Larsen and Mads Klitgaard, "Kvindelig 3F-leder sendes øjeblikkeligt på orlov på grund af #metoo-sag mod mandlig medarbejder," *Berlingske Tidende*, February 2, 2022, <https://www.berlingske.dk/virksomheder/kvindelig-3f-leder-sendes-oejeblikkeligt-paa-orlov-paa-grund-af-metoo#:~:text=Virksomheder-,Kvindelig%203F%2Dleder%20sendes%20%C3%B8jeblikkeligt%20p%C3%A5%20orlov%20p%C3%A5%20grund%20af,en%20konkret%20%23metoo%2Dsag.>

³³ Ritzau, "Bestyrelse vil mødes, efter Michael Bojesen skrev mail om sangers bryster," *TV2News*, April 14, 2022, [https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2022-04-14-bestyrelse-vil-modes-efter-michael-bojesen-skrev-mail-om-sangers-bryster.](https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2022-04-14-bestyrelse-vil-modes-efter-michael-bojesen-skrev-mail-om-sangers-bryster)

³⁴ 322 Co-signers, "Sexisme, seksuel chikane og magtmissbrug er overalt i vores samfund, også i de politiske partier," *Politiken*, September 25, 2022, [https://politiken.dk/debat/debatindlaeg/art7938422/%C2%BBsexisme-seksuel-chikane-og-magtmissbrug-er-overalt-i-vores-samfund-ogs%C3%A5-i-de-politiske-partier%C2%AB.](https://politiken.dk/debat/debatindlaeg/art7938422/%C2%BBsexisme-seksuel-chikane-og-magtmissbrug-er-overalt-i-vores-samfund-ogs%C3%A5-i-de-politiske-partier%C2%AB)

³⁵ Lisa Seidelin, "En strøm af sexismendberetninger starter opgør på hospitalerne," *Politiken*, October 2, 2020, [https://www.rm.dk/api/NewESDHBLOCK/DownloadFile?agendaPath=%5C%5CRMAPPS0221.onerm.dk%5CCMS01-EXT%5CESDH%20Data%5CRM_Internet%5Cdagsordener%5Cden_gode_arbejdsplad%202020%5C04-11-2020%5CAaben_dagsorden&appen DixId=286682.](https://www.rm.dk/api/NewESDHBLOCK/DownloadFile?agendaPath=%5C%5CRMAPPS0221.onerm.dk%5CCMS01-EXT%5CESDH%20Data%5CRM_Internet%5Cdagsordener%5Cden_gode_arbejdsplad%202020%5C04-11-2020%5CAaben_dagsorden&appen DixId=286682)

TV channel, TV2: Jens Gaardbo and Jes Dorph-Petersen.³⁶ 1689 university professors signed a manifesto revealing sexual threats and violations in academia, and employees in trade unions and the Copenhagen restaurant scene followed with stories of sexism – from constant masculinist jokes to more physical attacks. First in *Atlas* magazine and then on national TV, Lisa Lind Dunbar went public with abuse and toxicity in several Copenhagen Michelin restaurants, where this young woman had waitressed.³⁷ And the Danish Girls' Choir, where Michael Bojesen had taken his pleasures, kept coming up in the news.

Appropriating #MeToo

With the unpleasant revelations about powerful males transgressing sexual boundaries, a new male figure entered the political and cultural scenes. “The Modern Man” appeared as a Scandinavian revision of American #MeToo villains, a type walking the streets of urban Denmark, a café latte or a baby in hand. This man felt no fear of his feminine traits and often subscribed to fluid gender categories. The *Vogue* photos of singer and pop icon Harry Styles wearing dresses received a great deal of attention and approval among Danes sick of old boys and their vices.³⁸ But the photos also inspired appropriation of feminine or feminist ideologies among traditional men with power, for example in the “Respect High Heels” campaign. In this push for more female board members in Danish businesses, some of the most influential men in Denmark wore high heels to express their solidarity with gender equality in Danish board rooms. Running over twelve days up to International Women’s Day on March 8, 2022, the shoe company Roccamore sought to kick through the glass ceiling with a team of powerful men modeling four limited-edition women’s shoes. The posters appeared everywhere in public spaces and featured Bjarne Corydon, former Minister of Finance and now Chief Editor of *Børsen*, the Danish Wall Street Journal; Brian Mikkelsen, President of Danish Industry; Morten Strunge, philosopher and CEO of Podimo, a podcast platform, and Morten Albæk, financier-writer. On

³⁶ Mette Stender Pedersen, “To kvinder står frem om sager, der kostede Jes Dorph jobbet: – Det var væmmeligt og voldsomt,” *TV2News*, November 29, 2021, <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2021-11-29-to-kvinder-staar-frem-om-sager-der-kostede-jes-dorph-jobbet-det-var-vaemmeligt-og>; Andreas Wentoft, “Tv-vært Jens Gaardbo stopper på TV 2,” *Se og Hør*, December 11, 2020, <https://www.seoghoer.dk/kendte/tv-vaert-jens-gaardbo-stopper-paa-tv-2>.

³⁷ Lisa Lind Dunbar, “Bon Appétit,” *Atlas*, January 20, 2022, <https://atlasmag.dk/kultur/bon-app%C3%A9tit>.

³⁸ Hamish Bowles, “Playtime with Harry Styles,” *Vogue*, November 13, 2020, <https://www.vogue.com/article/harry-styles-cover-december-2020>.

a pink background, these men all wore stilettos, though with a distinctly male body language, legs spread wide and all. Supposedly, they promoted feminism and women in board rooms, reduced iconically to high heels, but reactions were divided, especially because the four men presided over boards with women in a distinct minority. One review headlined “Yak, femiwashing?” noted: “In Roccamore’s shoe campaign #RespectHighHeels Overdenmark’s macho men have taken out stilettos. Sympathetic but also a double standard act, as they all have completely or partly male-dominated boards. Are they to be forgiven for good intentions or punished for their lack of action?”³⁹ An Instagram commentator responded to Roccamore: “Only 20% of all board members in Danish companies are female – 1 woman for every 4 men. It’s 6%, if you remove family connections. This is a poor reflection of what the world outside the boardrooms looks like in 2022. It’s a waste of talent and potential. And an opportunity to do better! 🍊”⁴⁰ The powerful men donning heels might not be motivated by beliefs in women in boardrooms; instead, their facial expressions and body language suggest their humorous approach to feminism, presenting an amusing excuse to brand themselves differently in a non-committal gesture towards Danish women’s equality. The images remain advertising – for Roccamore, and for the men themselves, who present themselves as subscribing to a softer, more sensitive masculinity, Scandinavian style.

In fact, this high-heels campaign might help privileged white men consolidate their power. Revising earlier work by Robert W. Connell, Demetrakis Z. Demetriou argues in a *Theory & Society* article that elements of subordinate groups may be appropriated to create “a less overt way of patriarchal domination.”⁴¹ In a process he labels “dialectical pragmatism,” a hegemonic masculine *bloc* transforms itself into hybrid forms in a response to “new historical conjectures.”⁴² He sees hybridization as “a strategy for the reproduction of patriarchy.”⁴³ The masculinities at the top rung of social ladders incorporate diverse and seemingly opposite elements from marginalized groups – be it women, other ethnicities or LGBT+ communities – so as to create hybrid figurations of power

³⁹ Timme Bisgaard Munk and Anita Zhao, “Føj for en femiwashing?” *Kommunikationsforum*, March 9, 2022, <https://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/artikler/Talk-the-talk-then-walk-the-walk>.

⁴⁰ Roccamore_shoes, “RESPECT HIGH HEELS IN THE BOARDROOM,” Instagram, March 7, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CayrGjnqPUw/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=68666dc8-9897-4d81-9292-426cc74895aa.

⁴¹ Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, “Connell’s Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique,” *Theory & Society* 30, no. 3 (June 2001): 352, doi: 10.1023/A:1017596718715.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 348.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 349.

aimed to enhance traditional structures of dominance. The elite men in Roccamore ads accordingly respond to a renewed twenty-first-century demand for gender equality by making it their own brand but otherwise changing nothing. The heels work as “camouflage” to produce “something new and *unrecognizable*” that does not come across as opposition or resistance to claims for equality.⁴⁴ This camouflage consolidates dominance by appropriating the look – and the power – of protesting groups.

The #MeToo disclosures and the attention to gender influenced as well the jury of the 2021 Press Photo of the Year Competition, who announced in March 2022 that Jacob Ehrbahn won the “Open Section” competition with his photo series “Et liv efter voldtægt” (A Life after Rape), in which ten women agreed to be photographed in the nude in the setting where their rape had occurred, as a way to narrate the crime. In the most reproduced photo, a woman is leaning on a wall in a dark, enclosed space resembling a prison cell or a basement storage room, her lack of freedom also apparent in her passive, resigning body, seen from the back to suggest a more general, universal gender violation involving anonymous, powerless women. The jury noted a painterly quality to his work, and also Ehrbahn’s passion for storytelling. The plight of women harassed, raped, and abandoned filled the pages of newspaper reviewers and photographic arts jurors.

In the same competition, Martin Bubandt won “Portrait of the Year” with “Ulf Pilgaard,” the name and face of the most famous comedian in Denmark. The eighty-one-year-old performer, photographed from the waist up, is wearing nothing but big pearl earrings and a matching pearl necklace across his hairy, suntanned chest. The Jury explained its choice: “It is a photo that draws you in, because he looks back at us, and he is enormously present, while simultaneously there is a hint of teasing, a small ‘smirk’ in his eyes.” Amidst discussions of fluid gender definitions, Ulf Pilgaard (and his photographer) rely on his obvious masculinity and strength to carry an ambiguous message. As a comedian, Pilgaard signals laughter and humor, perhaps even mockery of new, more feminized masculinities, while also appropriating the fashionable abandonment of binary gender categories. Or is he simply performing? The photographer had caught Pilgaard on camera at the close of his last circus show and received the verdict from the unanimous photography jury: “It is a great idea that a different identity is created with quite simple props, inspiring the viewer to start a discovery

⁴⁴ Ibid., 355.

process.”⁴⁵ #MeToo in Denmark had inspired this exploration, though its outcome remains unclear in the prize-winning photo. That Pilgaard, or his photographer, would embody a feminist message in this photo seems improbable, since he is also famous for impersonating (and gently mocking) the Danish Queen Margrethe in summer circus performances. He seems funny to popular audiences as he steps onto stages walking unsteadily on high heels and dressed in skirts and wigs. Rather than changing ideas about masculinity and restoring agency to women, he reinscribes masculinity not only with his hairy, naked chest, but also with his shows that stress the incompatibility of male bodies and female attire to make his audiences laugh. In fact, the pearls become almost insignificant on this hypermasculine body, or they gesture towards his Queen impersonations rather than towards any kind of gender fluidity. Instead, he confirms a socially significant hegemonic masculinity that shapes our distinction between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” gendered behavior and thus, as James W. Messerschmidt and others argue, legitimizes unequal gender relations.⁴⁶ With an Americanized inscription, his image mixes robust American and softer Scandinavian masculinities into a transatlantic cocktail, in which resistance to – or fascination with – monarchy adds extra flavor.

Big Boys Fight Back

Fourth-wave Americanization resulted as well in the strong reaction to political correctness that influential members of the Danish business community share with the US political right. Ulf Pilgaard’s hint of humor, or mocking, did not extend to other Danish powerful men, who united behind male #MeToo so-called “victims,” all defamed by their accusers and public opinion. In *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, Kate Manne calls this phenomenon “himpathy,” which she defines as “the excessive sympathy sometimes shown towards male perpetrators of sexual violence.” Manne finds this “overlooked mirror image of misogyny” so common that it constitutes the rule rather than the exception, but she notes that this reaction rarely enters discussions of sexual violence: “It is so overlooked that it is a ‘problem with no name,’ to use Betty Friedan’s famous phrase from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).”⁴⁷ Thanks to himpathy, former

⁴⁵ Ida Sejersdal Dreisager, “Her er vinderen af Årest Pressefoto,” *Jyllandsposten*, March 4, 2022, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/kultur/ECE13797053/her-er-vinderen-af-aarets-pressefoto-2021/>.

⁴⁶ James W. Messerschmidt, “The Saliency of ‘Hegemonic Masculinity,’” *Men and Masculinities* 22, no. 1 (March 2019): 91, doi: 10.1177/1097184X18805555.

⁴⁷ Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 197.

Copenhagen major Frank Jensen now runs a consulting business advising management and is on the boards of many public and private businesses in green energy, SDG, and the energy supply sector overall.⁴⁸ In August 2021, after an eight-month sick leave, the now-divorced Morten Østergaard, Ex-Chair of the Radical Left party and former Minister of Taxation, began his new job as a climate consultant in cBrain, whose Administrative Director announced that he has no interest in or knowledge of Østergaard's previous sexual transgressions.⁴⁹ New employment in the green energy sector might constitute not only himpathy but also a "greenwashing" of past predatory behaviors, in the hope – and maybe the reality – that global warming threats override feminine and feminist grievances.

Only seven out of twenty-five politicians in the local Nyborg City Council have asked to see the whistleblower report about the notorious December 3 Christmas party, with the Chair of the influential Health and Prevention Committee, Jan Reimer Christensen, declaring: "I don't need to know more of anything relating to this. (...) Let us move on."⁵⁰ The City Council moved on by commissioning an investigation of the work culture at Nyborg City Hall. Issued on August 9, 2022, by Komponent, a counseling company owned by the National City Council Association, the report concluded that no culture of sexual harassment or transgression existed in Nyborg City Council.⁵¹ In a bad case of Manne's "denialism," Nyborg mayor Kenneth Muus expressed his gratitude for this valuable knowledge and declared himself relieved that he and his colleagues did not operate in a toxic work culture.⁵² In the US, this sort of himpathy, or forgiveness, does not extend to #MeToo figures such as Harvey Weinstein or singer R. Kelly, perhaps another indication of a revised fourth-wave Americanization in Denmark.

⁴⁸ Uffe Dahl, "Her er Frank Jensens nye job," *NewsBreak*, April 26, 2021, <https://newsbreak.dk/a-historier/her-er-frank-jensens-nye-job/384024/>.

⁴⁹ Kristian Magnus, "Morten Østergaards nye arbejdsgiver: – Jeg har ikke talt med ham om krænkelse," *TV2Østjylland*, June 18, 2021, <https://www.tv2ostjylland.dk/oestjylland/morten-oestergaards-nye-arbejdsgiver-jeg-har-ikke-talt-med-ham-om-kraenkelse>.

⁵⁰ Ole Frank Rasmussen and Frederikke Lysbjerg Sørensen, "Nyborg-politikere vil ikke læse whistleblowers nødråb: Under halvdelen har bedt om at se korrespondance," *TV2Fyn*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.tv2fyn.dk/nyborg/nyborg-politikere-vil-ikke-laese-whistleblowers-noedraab-under-halvdelen-har-bedt-om-at-se-korrespondance>.

⁵¹ See Komponent, *Kulturanalyse i Nyborg Kommune: Afrapportering* [Culture Analysis in Nyborg City Council: Report], August 9, 2022.

⁵² Manne, *Down Girl*, 198; Frank Weirsøe, "Undersøgelse konkluderer: Der er ingen krænkelseskultur i Nyborg," *TV2Fyn*, August 9, 2022, <https://www.tv2fyn.dk/nyborg/undersogelse-konkluderer-der-er-ingen-kraenkelseskultur-i-nyborg>.

Professor Emeritus at the National Center for Work Environment Tage Søndergaard Kristensen pointed out, however, that as a member of the National City Council Association, Nyborg City Council co-owned Komponent, whose conclusions accordingly seemed less than objective, and that an independent company would have been preferable.⁵³ Jesper Olsen, Chair of Transparency International Denmark, states that “cases about a rotten culture or problematic behavior are made into a legal issue [only] when a board or a CEO feels sufficiently pressured.” Associate Research Professor at the Danish School of Media and Journalism Roger Buch notes that legal investigations into regional council cases rarely have direct consequences. Psychologist and business culture expert Mille Mortensen finds that organizations handling cases of sexual harassment and bullying only through legal investigations often result in “cover my ass-strategies.”⁵⁴ An article with this suggestive title in *Akademikerbladet*, a union publication for academics, ends with a list of ten recent illustrious individual or institutional cases that have prompted investigations by legal teams.

The list does not include the Danish military, though stories of rape and harassment have surfaced here as well. In “Rape, Nude Photos and Hands on Thighs”, Susanne Baden Jensen lists violations inside the military from 2018 to the present and concludes that out of twenty-four individuals who had been fined for sexual transgressions, ten still retained their positions as of February 2022.⁵⁵ This situation evokes a body typology Arthur W. Frank identifies in “For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytical Review,” his contribution to Mike Featherstone’s *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*: the disciplined body. In Frank’s body typology, the disciplined body seeks control so as to eliminate the threat of its contingency through predictability, which it approaches by following a regimen such as a diet or a fitness program. As long as this regimentation remains successful, the body is predictable to itself. When internal control fails to check the physical contingency, however, the disciplined body may resort to domination in a need to control other bodies, rather than its own. It tends to place itself in hierarchical structures, such as the military, and it may perform among others, but it does not sustain relations with them. Frank calls it

⁵³ Weirsoe, “Undersøgelse konkluderer.”

⁵⁴ Pernille Siegumfeldt, “Cover My Ass-Strategies,” *Akademikerbladet* 22, no. 4 (2022): 25–26.

⁵⁵ The Danish title has been translated by the author. See Susanne Baden Jensen, “Voldtægt, nøgenfotos og hænder på lå: Se listen med Forsvarets sager om overgreb og krænkelse,” *Alt.*, July 28, 2022, <https://www.alt.dk/artikler/sager-om-kraenkelse-og-overgreb-i-forsvaret-fra-audioerkoerksaets-aarsberetning>.

“a virtuoso in the practice of the regimen.”⁵⁶ Should the disciplined body begin to break its isolation and relate to others, it may do so by force, since it needs to impose its own regimen on other bodies. Discipline here flips into domination. Curiously, Trine Bramsen, the Danish Minister of Defense, was demoted to Minister of Transportation just as the Russian war on Ukraine broke out, replaced by a politician with a well-trained male body, Morten Bødskov, who immediately felt at home with his European colleagues. He is now instrumental in expanding the harbor in Esbjerg, on the coast of western Jutland, so that it may receive and accommodate heavy military equipment and transportation vehicles directly from the United States. A war in Europe necessitates a robust, masculine response, it seems, and a male body belongs within the military-industrial complex in full gear. That some male bodies within the military have not respected the boundaries of other soldiers and resorted to sexual violence, as Baden Jensen documents, moves into the background or may simply be tolerated, or expected.

Those Modern Men

A venomous attack on masculine self-righteousness, Kristina Nya Glaffey’s *To the Modern Man: A Portrait*, appeared in book stores, supermarkets, libraries, and book cafés in April 2022, distributed by the most respected publisher in Denmark, Gyldendal, which had sensed its marketing potential. But if Glaffey’s tone suggests aggression, American(ized) style, her villain seems Scandinavian in looks and demeanor. Beginning with a description of this new man’s fashionable living quarters and lifestyle choices, Glaffey ends her slim volume with a sarcastic invocation for the new feminist males that deserves a lengthy quote:

May you *read in public* at the debate for more pregnancy leave for men.

May you imagine that you are making a difference.

May you consider your place in the public debate.

May you take pride in regularly using your column to praise female artists...

May you try to make the statements that many men consider shrill feminism relatable to them. (...)

May you insist on giving space to statements by the many men who claim that they too are to be pitied.

⁵⁶ Arthur W. Frank, “For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytical Review,” in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth, and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), 55.

May you go on about the complicated world in which men must now *navigate* these days.⁵⁷

Interviewed on the TV evening program *Deadline*, with an audience of Danish intellectuals, the ruffled male anchor asked a stone-faced Glaffey what a modern, well-intentioned man was supposed to do. “Shut up,” she responded, “and give space to voices other than your own.”⁵⁸

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the first female Prime Minister of Denmark (2011–15) and the first female Leader of the Social Democratic Party (2005–15), likewise asked all men to listen instead. After her term as Prime Minister and subsequent Head of Save the Children International in London (2016–19), she published *Blondinens Betragtninger: Om Køn, Feminisme og #MeToo* [Blonde Reflections: On Gender, Feminism, and #MeToo]. Its cover was Barbie-pink and its easily misunderstood title was apparently inspired by the film *Legally Blonde* (2001), in which Reese Witherspoon battles gender stereotyping.⁵⁹ The Ex-Prime Minister rode a fourth wave of Americanization by referencing American pop culture, presumably to enhance book sales. In her first chapter, Thorning-Schmidt emphasizes that listening to other people’s experiences would be instructive: “Are you a man who believes that Denmark has long ago achieved gender equality, then try to ask a woman close to you if she agrees. Listen to what she has to say.” Men need to begin by asking open questions, she repeats, that do not require women to prove their lack of equality “every hour, every day, and every week.”⁶⁰

The former Prime Minister stresses the importance of work cultures. Looking back at her time in the Social Democratic Party, she saw in the back mirror a “very homogeneous, masculine culture.” She learned to be one of the boys, or she would run into trouble. As for sexual transgressions, it was understood that women should keep at a distance the men with loose hands or fond of sexual innuendos. Nobody, she writes, thought this culture might be different or abusive. People, herself included, dismissed it, shrugged, or chuckled. For this reason, she now supports the #MeToo movement wholeheartedly and credits it

⁵⁷ Kristina Nya Glaffey, *To the Modern Man* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2022), 94–95 (author’s translation).

⁵⁸ Deadline-DR, “Er den moderne mand en hykler?,” Facebook, April 2, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/DR2Deadline/videos/er-den-moderne-mand-en-hykler/655848732159683/>.

⁵⁹ Helle Thorning-Schmidt, *Blondinens Betragtninger: Om Køn, Feminisme og #MeToo* (Copenhagen: 28B, 2021), 11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 19, 25 (author’s translation).

with changing mentalities and vocabularies in recent years. She gets tired, she continues, of men claiming to be victims of a different era. They could also, she suggests, stress that for twenty or thirty years they have benefited from a time when predatory behavior was tolerated and nobody held them responsible.⁶¹ She promotes new visions of femininity and masculinity, including fluid gender categorizations, the dismantling of patriarchy, and the existence of inner bias in everyone on the gender continuum.

Nonetheless, she herself did little to raise awareness of gender discrimination during her term as a Social Democratic Prime Minister, nor does her Barbie-pink book and its title necessarily promote her message. In a gesture towards Americanization, Thorning-Schmidt compares herself to Barack Obama, who stayed away from race issues for most of his presidency, and she feared during her time in power that her gender, rather than her qualifications, would take center stage.⁶² Reviewers noted that Thorning-Schmidt had all the politically correct views on gender and #MeToo, but offered no political solutions whatsoever.⁶³ For this reason, perhaps, Danish politicians have ignored her pink book, while TV talk shows have taken an interest in her daughter's gender confirmation surgery and Thorning-Schmidt's own feminine demeanor rather than in her explicit feminist and political views. A public library in an affluent part of Copenhagen had acquired eleven copies of her book, ten of which looked remarkably unread. As the first female prime minister, she offers interesting views into the workings of power, both in Denmark and in the EU, but her chatty, humorous tone makes it only too easy to dismiss her experiences as irrelevant or, yes, just a blonde's reflections.

#MeToo and Class

The most thorough revision of American #MeToo came out in trade union circles across Denmark, which generated discussions of class. #MeToo matters to young Danish people and a lack of response to its push for justice for victims of sexual violence might result in dwindling numbers of trade union members, mostly Social Democrats, and a weakening of the Danish Welfare State. La-wand Hiwa Namu, a twenty-something former speechwriter for the Danish

⁶¹ Ibid., 121.

⁶² Ibid., 8.

⁶³ Gry Inger Reiter, "Helle Thorning-Schmidt afslører, at hun har mistet troen på, at politik kan ændre verden," *Information*, October 5, 2021, <https://www.information.dk/indland/anmeldelse/2021/10/helle-thorning-schmidt-afslorer-mistet-troen-paa-politik-kan-aendre-verden>.

Trade Union Confederation of 1.3 million members, argued in *Deadline* on May 1, 2022, International Workers' Day, that trade union indifference to, or neglect of, #MeToo violations will cost 3F a whole generation of members. By passing up an opportunity to reach young people, 3F comes across as an old-school, old-boys network, out of touch with those who also belong in a job category that trade unions overlook: the temporary, precarious work that many young people prefer or can get. Danish trade unions, he argues, see only employers and employees but not the new precariat. On several counts, then, including #MeToo, trade unions will lose power and will no longer be able to defend the rights they originally won for wage-earning Danes: the thirty-seven-hour work week, pregnancy leave, five weeks of vacation, and free health care. Namø tweeted that seeing "MeToo as hostile to men is a misunderstanding. But the masculine role is changing and the responsibility for the outcome is ours."⁶⁴ As a Modern Man, he works for change and equality, but as a trade union reporter, he includes class as a neglected category in the debate. He reminds us that Danish welfare might vanish if we do not take #MeToo seriously. To address the concerns of a younger membership or to clean up its image, 3F forced its long-time President, Per Christensen, to resign for living a double life with two families, each unaware of the existence of the other. The case was initially addressed as a private matter outside the influence and interests of 3F, an attitude that changed after intense media scrutiny and an executive crisis meeting on January 25, 2022. Per Christensen left his positions but announced on Facebook that his secret bigamy had never impacted his professional life.

Class also determined the outcome of a recent #MeToo scandal in Denmark. In May 2022, a TV2 documentary titled "The Secrets of Herlufsholm" revealed cases of bullying and sexual violence at this elite boarding school, which dates back to 1565, when Herlufsholm was founded as a school for the aristocracy on beautiful grounds formerly occupied by a Benedictine monastery from the twelfth century. Fifty students testified about the abuses they had suffered, often from groups of older students who had been assigned as prefects, and often at night in their dormitories. The Crown Prince couple immediately issued a statement about the school their oldest son, Christian, attended and where his sister Isabella was also headed: "As parents of a child who goes to Herlufsholm, we are deeply shaken by the testimonies that appear in the current documentary about the school. It is heartbreaking to hear about systematic bullying and about

⁶⁴ Lawand Hiwa Namø, Twitter, February 2, 2021, <https://twitter.com/lawandnamo/status/1363385476615389186>.

the culture of abuse and violence that many have been a part of,” they wrote on Instagram.⁶⁵ A closed parliamentary session with Education Minister Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil followed; the school principal was asked to resign, and the prefect system abolished. After intense criticism from the National Agency for Education and Quality, the full board resigned the following month. But the royal couple hesitated, despite the Crown Princess Mary’s Foundation against bullying, partner abuse and loneliness that she founded in 2007 and still actively promotes. Their long hesitation and the time it took for them to decide about their own children’s school choice resulted in accusations of hypocrisy and royal elitism, with murmurs about abolishing the monarchy in their wake. Finally, in late June, they announced that Prince Christian would not continue at Herlufsholm and that his younger sister would not be enrolled there either.⁶⁶ The Danish public had managed to establish that no exceptions, royal status included, could be tolerated in #MeToo situations. Once again, class and #MeToo went hand in hand in Denmark, though this time at the top rungs of the social ladder. The fourth wave of Americanization threatened, not so surprisingly, royal power and privilege, if not with quite the revolutionary fervor of colonial soldiers fighting against the sovereignty of King George III.

Of Gender and Gaps

Ex-Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt mentions in the first chapter of her book that Denmark year by year sinks further down the list of countries in the World Economic Forum’s *Global Gender Gap Report*.⁶⁷ In 2022, Denmark reached number 32, below Albania, the Philippines, and Burundi.⁶⁸ The report is usually met with criticism of its methodology, as well as its failure to interpret correctly the education, employment numbers, life expectancy, and number of children that certainly place Denmark above Burundi or Rwanda, but still below

⁶⁵ Ritzau, “Dybt rystet kronprinspar forventer ændringer på Herlufsholm,” *Berlingske Tidende*, May 5, 2022, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/dybt-rystet-kronprinspar-forventer-aendring-er-paa-herlufsholm>.

⁶⁶ Louise Bolvig Hansen, “Kronprinsparret trækker prins Christian ud af Herlufsholm,” *TV2News*, June 26, 2022, <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2022-06-26-kronprinsparret-traekker-prins-christian-ud-af-herlufsholm>.

⁶⁷ Thorning-Schmidt, *Blondinens Betragtninger*, 8.

⁶⁸ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report*, July 13, 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>.

other Nordic countries, all in the top five.⁶⁹ The director of KVINFO, a research and information center devoted to gender issues, finds the report revealing. It shows, Henriette Laursen argues, an unequal gender distribution in politics and in board rooms, where only half of the biggest five hundred companies have any women at all. She notes in July 2022 that only 14 out of 98 mayors are women and concludes that Denmark is not in the vanguard but in the rearguard of Nordic gender equality.⁷⁰ Compared to Sweden, even the second #MeToo wave in Denmark seems cushy and forbearing.

Thorning-Schmidt explains this difference with the long-standing and polarized Swedish gender debates, with the fact that Sweden is hampered by more violence and crime, and as a rule-based society generates more conflict and intense responses.⁷¹ The Swedish #MeToo movement took on the Swedish Academy, which awards the Nobel Prize, with accusations over transgressive sexual acts, rape included, by a prominent member of the Nobel committee.⁷² The director of Stockholm City Theater was held responsible for a culture of silence that enabled predatory actors to harass and humiliate actors and staff at the theater. He committed suicide during a trip to Australia at the age of fifty-eight, his death causing some moral hangovers in the Swedish media industry.⁷³ Thorning-Schmidt ascribes intense responses to #MeToo accusations in Sweden to the country's rigid rules concerning everything from alcohol consumption to crime. The long tradition of feminism, including militant variants, might also help explain the stormy #MeToo weather in Sweden. Despite her somewhat flimsy post-Prime Minister credibility, reduced by blinding and botox, the former Head of State knows Scandinavia well and pinpoints accurately the differences between her own country and the big neighbor across Øresund. She could also

⁶⁹ Karen Sjørup, "Er Danmark virkelig dårligere til ligestilling end Burundi?" *Akademikerbladet*, November 25, 2016, <https://www.akademikerbladet.dk/debat/karen-sjoerup/er-danmark-virkelig-daarligere-til-ligestilling-end-burundi>.

⁷⁰ Kvinfor, "Kritisk blik på årets Global Gender Gap måling og Danmarks dårlige placering," *Webmagasinet Kønsinformation*, July 26, 2022, <https://kvinfo.dk/2022/07/26/kritisk-blik-paa-aarets-global-gender-gap-maaling-og-danmarks-daarlige-placering/?lang=en>.

⁷¹ Thorning-Schmidt, *Blondinens Betragtninger*, 106.

⁷² Silas Bay Nielsen, "Nobel-akademi i kaos efter #metoo-anklager: Nu venter alle på svar," *DR.DK Kultur*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/nobel-akademi-i-kaos-efter-metoo-anklager-nu-venter-alle-paa-svar>.

⁷³ Ulrik Støjer Kappel, "Bærer svenske medier noget af ansvaret for selvmord i kølvandet på #MeToo?," *Kristeligt Dagblad*, March 21, 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kultur/baerer-svenske-medier-noget-af-ansvaret-selvord-i-koelvaendet-paa-metoo#:~:text=Den%20tidligere%20teatercheffs%20navn%20blev,operasangerinde%20Anne%20Sofie%20von%20Otter>.

have pointed to the influence of American superpower, which has intensified Swedish intolerance towards alcohol, crime, and non-Western immigration.

In/Conclusions

The first Danish #MeToo movement quickly fizzled out in 2017, when #MeToo in the US had taken off with charges against Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby, Woody Allen, and others. Perhaps most Danes felt that they belonged to the forefront of gender equality and smugly concluded that this battle had already been won. After all, the Danes had legalized visual pornography in 1969, a move that cemented Denmark as a free-spirited sexual environment. In 1984 men could by law take paternity leave, a right that was repeatedly consolidated and expanded through the 1990s. Images of men walking baby carriages or scrubbing the toilet increased the belief that men and women were equal on all counts. Women had entered the work force, with only a quarter of all women – especially immigrants – outside the labor market. Thorning-Schmidt pointed as well to Danish complacency and provincialism. Because of the communal spirit and the “hygge” culture, Danes get so self-satisfied that they – we – cannot give up our own beliefs about the state of the world, and these beliefs – open-mindedness and equality, for starters – rarely get challenged by outside influences or events.⁷⁴ But a fourth wave of Americanization did travel across protected Danish borders.

In August 2020, the #MeToo movement exploded with TV host Sofie Linde’s story of sexual threats from a prominent, if unnamed, media figure, and #MeToo activism began for real. Big Boys fell in its wake, and few institutions escaped accusations about sexual and verbal transgressions in the workspace – TV and media, hospitals, health care centers, universities, political organizations and the Danish parliament, the Copenhagen gourmet restaurant scene, the Danish Girls’ Choir, and lately the National Lutheran Church.⁷⁵ Efforts at appropriation have nonetheless met with some success, with superficial support for #MeToo combined with efforts to maintain the status quo. Such efforts empowered the formerly disgraced men, who in many cases have reentered the communities of their peers. Responses in academia, with Kenneth Reinicke at the forefront, zoomed in on masculine responses and dilemmas, but self-proclaimed feminists

⁷⁴ Thorning-Schmidt, *Blondinens Betragtninger*, 47.

⁷⁵ Niels Hein, “Ekspertter advarer om mørketal for overgreb i kirken,” *Kristeligt Dagblad*, June 16, 2022, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-og-tro/ekspertter-advarer-om-moerketal-overgreb-i-kirken>.

such as Kristina Nya Glaffey and Ex-Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt entered the gender battle with unforgiving or more conciliatory analyses of both men and women in Danish #MeToo 2.0. They were joined by spokespersons in younger generations stressing class in #MeToo discussions and adding to the spicy mixture the future of the Welfare State, which trade union indifference to sexual harassment might jeopardize. Indeed, Crown Prince Frederik and his wife, Crown Princess Mary, found themselves immersed in #MeToo dilemmas when they hesitated to move their children from Herlufholm, the elite boarding school now stigmatized by reports of bullying and sexual violence. They found out that high class did not protect them from the Danish public's insistence that they take #MeToo revelations seriously. Finally, the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* for 2022 brought home that gender equality in Denmark lagged behind other Nordic countries, where Sweden, for example, had fared better. Across Øresund, Denmark's Scandinavian neighbor had also been hit by #MeToo, but outcomes had often been more severe than in laid-back, complacent Denmark.

#MeToo 2.0 is not over. Thorning-Schmidt revealed in her take on the movement her worry that it has not come far enough, even in its latest version: "Have we learned enough? Have we changed enough? Have we enough depth and scope in the discussion to implement lasting changes in the relationship between men and women?"⁷⁶ These discussions still focus on individual transgressions, rather than on systemic enabling. In the most recent revelations, Simon Spies, travel agency king extraordinaire and founder of the Spies concern that sent millions of Danes to sun and fun from 1956 onwards, has been toppled from his status as iconic businessman and role model by a reevaluation of his habit of keeping a harem of fourteen-to-eighteen-year-old working-class girls both in his private quarters and in public appearances. He paid the girls for sex and allegedly, to beat them up or break an arm. One girl especially, Heidi, has entered the news stream, with photos of a smiling, apple-cheeked teen juxtaposed with a dying AIDS-infected heroin addict, Heidi at twenty-five.⁷⁷ A Simon Spies sign in a square named for him disappeared briefly in Helsingør (Elsinore), where he was born and raised, and was later returned with angry, derogatory inscriptions. This case has also prompted a call for new, less euphemistic terminology for abuse and violence overall, inspired by American inclinations towards calling

⁷⁶ Thorning-Schmidt, *Blondinens Betragtninger*, 7.

⁷⁷ "Spies og morgenbølle damerne," produced by Gitte Hasseltoft Hansen and Lau Rabjerg-Eriksen (DR1 2022), three episodes of 43 minutes, https://www.dr.dk/drtv/serie/spies-og-morgenbolle-damerne_323550.

a spade a spade. In *Deadline*, the late-night TV program, and in a just-published book, Niels Frank recounts his sister's murder by her ex-husband and calls for a new vocabulary, for example by changing the media's "family tragedy" to "wife murder," and by replacing references to Simon Spies' young sexual companions from "ladies" to what they actually were: very young or underage working-class girls.⁷⁸ Ultimately, however, #MeToo, in all its global manifestations, takes on power and the institutions legitimizing its abuses. Radical activism of the kind Ralph Young describes and promotes in *Dissent: The History of an American Idea* is obviously still necessary and the battle far from won.

#MeToo has rolled across Denmark in forms that the US movement inspired, but it has also helped along a fourth wave of Americanization. From 2016, Danes read daily news reports about Trump's outrageous behaviors, about the Muller report and the two impeachments of the 45th President, about his continued popularity among voters in his base, about school shootings, the spread of the corona virus, police violence against defenseless black men, and mass incarcerations. This social and political scene in the US caused Danes and other Scandinavians to distance themselves from the nation that had previously commanded respect during three waves of Americanization. But #MeToo changed this view, if slowly. By 2020, the US had taken first place in the fight for women's rights, and dissenters marching against predatory power structures became valued, admired role models. Accordingly, a fourth wave of Americanization was already spraying Danish shores when Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. This fourth wave is gaining momentum in Scandinavia, as the US moves military equipment in and announces still another huge donation to the Ukrainian resistance. With Ukrainian women and children fleeing to countries such as Denmark, gender will hardly be forgotten. #MeToo violations might, however, fade from public view in Scandinavia and elsewhere as streams of catastrophic developments flood into the twenty-first century.

⁷⁸ Niels Frank, *Fanden Tage Dig* [May the Devil Take You] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2022). Interview by Niels Krause-Kjær, Deadline, DR4, August 29, 2022, https://www.dr.dk/drtv/se/deadline_-hvorfor-maa-folkekirken-diskriminere_333154.