

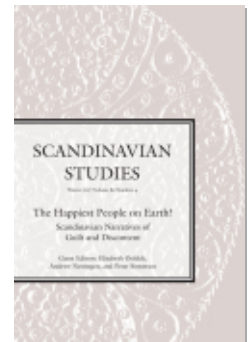


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and (Not Quite) Dark Tourism

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Danish Ex-Colony Travel: Paradise Discourse, Commemoration, and (Not Quite) Dark Tourism

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OUR OLD TROPICAL COLONIES

In the conclusion of her book *Danmarks gamle Tropekolonier* (Denmark's Old Tropical Colonies) from 1946, geographer, writer, and traveler Sophie Petersen wrote that

ved Siden af Sorgen over, at disse [de tidligere kolonier] ikke længer er dansk Jord, [er der] ogsaa . . . Mulighed for Glæde over, at der er saa mange Minder tilbage derude om Danmark baade i Form af Bygningsværker og i Menneskers Minde. Derfor er det en stor Oplevelse for en Dansk at færdes i vore gamle Tropekolonier, i Egne, hvor Slægt efter Slægt af Danske har virket, og hvor Dannebrog engang har vajet i mer end 200 Aar. (Petersen 1946, 407)

(while there is regret that they [the former colonies] are no longer Danish soil, [there is also] an opportunity for joy, for there are so many memories about Denmark on the islands, both in the form of buildings and in the people's memory. It is therefore an incredible experience for a Dane to visit our old tropical colonies, where generations of Danes once worked, and where the "Dannebrog" flew for more than 200 years.)

1. Thank you to Julianne Yang who first introduced me to the concept of dark tourism. Thanks to the international office of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin for a travel grant that supported a research trip to the US Virgin Islands in 2012, and to the Faculty of Philosophy II at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin for funding a research trip to Ghana in 2014.

Petersen's *Danmarks gamle Tropekolonier* (1946) and the multivolume *Vore gamle Tropekolonier* (Brøndsted 1952–1953; 1966–1968; Our Old Tropical Colonies) were, for a long time, among the most influential publications on Danish colonial history. Petersen's book is part historiography and part travelogue from her extensive travels, and the chapters are organized accordingly: they start with overviews of the history of the respective places, and end with sections about the situation at the time of the author's travels, for instance, "A Visit to Present India." Petersen's travels to Danish former colonies are travels on a collective memory lane, and nostalgia is easy to discern.

Commemoration and Tourism

The memory of, and travel to, Danish ex-colonies is gaining new relevance in the context of the 2017 commemoration of the transfer of the former Danish West Indies, today's US Virgin Islands, to the United States in 1917. It seems that with the commemoration, a new phase is reached of Danish cultural remembrance of their circum-Atlantic colonial history and the triangular trade. There is a clearly recognizable new interest in the former Danish Caribbean islands: journalistic, artistic, political, and—not least—touristic. A large share of the material for this article on Danish tourism to former colonies is, indeed, advertisement for "jubilæumsrejser," anniversary trips, to "Dansk Vestindien," the name still widely used in Denmark for the US Virgin Islands.

Ian Gregory Strachan argues that "tourist advertising . . . maps and commodifies the region for the world consumer" (2002, 1). Tourism and tourism advertising can be seen as complicit with colonial and capitalist practices, and this complicity has specific implications in the case of tourism to former colonies. Another argument for the inclusion of tourism in studies of postcolonial relations is that scholars of tourism have found evidence for what they call "lingering effects of colonialism on tourist movements" (McKercher and L'Espoir Decosta 2007). Danes are no exception to this pattern: they are the second largest group of tourists to the US Virgin Islands, and the former colony is the most popular destination for Danes in the Caribbean. Tourism, I argue, reflects and generates a discourse about the postcolonies, their relation to Denmark, and about Denmark as a colonial power. Tourism is also *de facto* one of the most important "contact zones" (Pratt 1993) of Danes with their former colonies.

For this article, I have studied tourism marketing material related to contemporary travel to two former Danish colonies: Danish tourism to the US Virgin Islands and to Ghana, the former Danish Gold

Coast (in Danish, “Guldkysten”). I have chosen to contrast the two destinations not only to balance the present one-sided attention to the West Indies, but also to be able to present a combination of different nuances and foci of tourism advertisement. They reflect the selling points of the respective destinations, which again reflect differing histories, discourses, and representational traditions connected to the Caribbean and Africa, respectively.² In addition, despite their similarities, the two case studies point at different modes of processing of postcolonial guilt and shame that, I argue, ex-colony travel contributes to.³ Sara Ahmed’s exploration of “felt communities” in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), especially the role of collective shame and pride in the postcolonial forming of perpetrator nations, has proven helpful when considering the affects involved in the meeting of tourists with former Danish colonies.⁴ Another aim of the article is therefore to discuss the stances tourists are encouraged to take on the history of slavery and the loss of empire, between reappropriation, reconciliation, and regret.

Paradise and Slavery

Some of the signals conveyed by the titles of the above-named publications, *Vore gamle Tropekolonier* and *Danmarks gamle Tropekolonier*,

2. For a third example, Tharangambadi (in Danish discourse, Tranquebar or Trankebar) in India, see Jørgensen (2013).

3. For Scandinavian postcolonial guilt, also see Oxfeldt (2016a), and for expressions of guilt and privilege in contemporary Scandinavian culture, see the research project at the University of Oslo: Scandinavian Narratives of Guilt and Privilege in an Age of Globalization (“ScanGuilt”; see <http://www.hf.uio.no/english/research/theme/scandinavian-narratives-of-guilt-and-privilege/>), and the anthology edited by Oxfeldt (2016b). Elisabeth Oxfeldt explains in the introduction to the anthology how guilt and shame are often used synonymously, but suggests that guilt is most often related to action, to actual wrongdoings, while shame might describe a state, or reaction (2016b, 15). I am using both words in this article, and in a similar manner. The meanings can overlap, but in general, guilt refers back to atrocities committed by Danes in the context of colonialism, the slave trade, and slavery, whereas shame is the present reaction when confronted with this legacy. Generally, there is only a little explicit mention of guilt, shame, and regret in the tourism marketing material used in this study. This is, needless to say, due to the nature of the material, whose purpose it is to produce happy tourists. However, as I explain in my readings of the material, there is more to the absence of such affects, namely, that they are actively replaced by other, more positively connoted ways to commemorate colonial history.

4. Elisabeth Oxfeldt (2016b, 20) explains that, in comparison, for example, with Germany, the Scandinavian countries share a self-understanding as communities of innocence rather than communities of guilt and shame. This self-understanding has contributed to a denial of the responsibility for wrongdoings and injustices, past and present, which is worth challenging.

have proven helpful parameters for my study. Contemporary sources forgo the blatant racism and legitimization of colonialism of some of the earlier texts. However, although they have shifted in meaning, the most salient four signals in the book titles seem to be remarkably constant. First, the possessive pronoun “vore” [our] signals belonging, possession, appropriation, and consumption. Second, the adjective “gamle” [old] signals temporal distance, but connotes a yearning for the past that scholars have conceptualized as “colonial melancholia” (Gilroy 2004) or “colonial nostalgia” (Lorcin 2012). The third word, “tropical,” has climatic and geographical but also cultural implications. Scholars have argued that, similar to the orientalist discourse prominently examined by Edward Said (1978), a tropicity discourse constructs the tropical regions as an ambivalent other to the West, or Global North, and contributes to their exoticization and commodification (Driver and Martins 2005). Finally, “colonies”: the books situate Denmark as part of European expansion and overseas imperialism, part of the transatlantic triangular trade, and, as part of the latter, part of the slave trade.

In the case of Sophie Petersen (1946), the national pride in having participated in, in her view, economically successful civilizing and cultivating endeavors is easy to recognize. Pride is one aspect of the book’s dominant feeling of melancholia or nostalgia: paradise is lost (cf. Thisted 2009; see also Olwig 2003; Hansen Østergaard 2017, for investigations into Danish colonial nostalgia). The metaphor of the lost paradise is indeed still in use. For instance, the Danish national broadcasting company DR aired in March 2017 the program “Danmark’s tabte paradis—salget af De Vestindiske Øer” (Denmark’s Lost Paradise—The Sale of the Danish West Indies). There is a popular understanding of what a tropical “paradise” destination looks and feels like, namely, sun, beaches, lush fauna, abundance of food and drinks, and leisure.

Recent research has pointed to a complicity of the paradise discourse with colonialism and capitalism. According to Sharae Deckard, imaginations and the search for an earthly “paradise” motivated European expansion and imperialism and have since shifted, initially to the consumption of “colonial produce,” and later to the consumption of the destination itself and connected consumer goods (2009, 1–2). So there is a long story of *producing* “paradise” for a European or Western imagination and *selling* paradise to the consumer and tourist. National pride and colonial nostalgia pertaining to the lost and

reclaimed tropical paradise are, however, haunted by postcolonial guilt, and tourism discourses can be understood as a form of processing of such conflicting reactions. I will show how agencies selling trips to the Caribbean tend to downplay, alleviate, or even bypass guilt by highlighting privilege, entitlement, and familiarity. In this case, tourism discourse thus keeps intact what is challenged elsewhere, for instance, in recent renewed debates about apologies and reparations (Nonbo Andersen 2017).

Another mode of commemoration and guilt management seems to be in place on the other side of the Atlantic. I will show in the second case study how Danish tourism to Ghana reflects the memory of the atrocities of slave trade as one of the local tourist industry's main selling points. Here, narratives of slavery from the point of view of its victims seem to find clearer entrance into the Danish tourism discourse. The term "dark tourism" has been introduced to study travel practices and affective dimensions of tourism "to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continue to impact our lives" (Carrigan 2014, 246). Most relevant for my study, sites of the public memory of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery—such as West African forts and plantations in the Americas and the Caribbean—have been added to the list of places and travel phenomena studied under the dark tourism label (Dann and Seaton 2001; Mowatt and Chancellor 2011). In contrast to Virgin Islands tourism, trips to Ghana seem to offer the acknowledgment and processing of guilt.

Postcolonial Denmark as Felt Community

In both cases, one could argue that the affects involved in the experience of former Danish territory "can bring 'the nation' into existence as a felt community" (Ahmed 2014, 101). In the case studied by Sara Ahmed in her chapter "Shame before Others"—Australia's relationship with its indigenous peoples—she describes the effects of public declarations of shame as "not only a mode of recognition of injustices committed against others, but also a form of nation building" (2014, 102), and ultimately "a mechanism for . . . self-reconciliation" (103). In that sense, the recognition of past wrongdoings does not necessarily lead to the inclusion of the wronged into the national body, but rather bypasses them when integrating regret into the majority's national narrative; a proximity arises between national shame and national pride. The process following a confrontation with a shameful past is inherently open, Ahmed argues; the question is whether it admits as

witnesses only members of the “felt community” or also those whose pain causes shame in the first place.

Transferred to the cases discussed here, I argue that Denmark’s connection to Ghana and the Virgin Islands is remembered and reinforced by the tourist discourse. Many sites of colonization, slavery, and slave trade are included in the tourist circuit of the respective places. In which sense does Denmark appear as “felt community” in the encounter of tourists with such sites, in tourism discourse, and who is included in the community? How “dark,” then, is Danish ex-colony tourism? How paradisiac are its destinations?

DANSK VESTINDIEN: DENMARK AND THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS

The three main islands in the US Virgin Islands are St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix. The islands were under Danish rule since 1666, 1675, and 1733, respectively, until their transfer to the United States in 1917. Their economy today is extremely dependent on tourism. Tourism and travel-related branches are the islands’ main industries and account for 60 percent of the GDP. The islands receive between 2 and 3 million visitors per year, among them up to 2 million cruise ship passengers. Around 90 percent of the visitors are from the United States. The second biggest—and steadily growing—group are Danish tourists, with an estimated number of 25,000 in 2017.⁵ The majority of the island population is Afro-Caribbean, with a White minority of around 15 percent. Around 30 percent of the population of the US Virgin Islands lives below the poverty line.⁶

Since November 2015, Norwegian Air Shuttle offers a direct route from Copenhagen to St. Croix. The route is advertised in the airline’s in-flight magazine *N by Norwegian* as follows:

The sun that warms these shores will always welcome Danish explorers. See Denmark’s rich history come alive in the Dansk Vestindien’s

5. The number will most likely be impacted by the severe consequences of the hurricanes that hit the Virgin Islands in September 2017.

6. Data for tourism to the US Virgin Islands are from 2014; see <http://www.usviber.org/pdfs/TOUR14.pdf>. Data for US Virgin Islands population and economy, according to the 2010 Census; see https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DPVI_VIDP2&prodType=table (accessed July 5, 2017). Thanks to Karin Gert Nielsen from Atlantic Link who has helped me with additional data about Danish tourism to the Virgin Islands.

enchanting present. Explore Christiansted and the fortress in Charlotte Amalie. Taste “red grout” and Danish fish pudding. You’ll feel intriguingly at home in this tropical haven of blue waters and seductive shores. You’ll discover a vibrant culture keen to commemorate its U.S. centennial in 2017. Above all, you’ll encounter a people always ready to welcome new or old friends.⁷

The historical connection between Denmark and its former colony is used as a selling point. Especially, the commemoration of the transfer of the islands to the United States in 2017 serves as an occasion to re-actualize the relationship between the two places. What happens rhetorically in the process in which the former Danish West Indies are transformed “from slave colony to modern tourist paradise” (Døygard and Døygard 1995) and, recently, as seen in the ad in *N by Norwegian*, to a brand, “Dansk Vestindien”?

The advertisement is, as I will show, typical for the promotion of the former Danish West Indies as a tourist destination. Colonial history (including the omitted slave trade and slavery) is presented as “rich history.” Colonial practices, such as naming and the construction of forts, as well as colonial tropes such as the “exploration,” exoticization, and eroticization of new land, as in the formulation “seductive shores,” are abundant in the short text.⁸ With the branding of the destination with its Danish name, the repeated marking of its national affiliation, the islands are re-appropriated as Danish territory, and for contemporary Danes, who are supposed to feel “at home.”

In addition to the more specific aspects of Danish colonial history, the advertisement text insinuates tropicality and paradise discourses. “Vibrancy,” friendliness, and hospitality have become clichés of Global South destinations and their inhabitants, but carry a problematic legacy as they refer back to racist discourses about servility tracing back to slavery-based plantation economies (Strachan 2002, 7–11).

7. Advertisement by visitusvi.com (the United States Virgin Islands official tourism site), *N by Norwegian*, November 2015: 16, <http://ink-live.com/emagazines/norwegian-magazine/2224/november-2015/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#16> (accessed January 15, 2018).

8. Anne McClintock examines such metaphors of virgin lands and imaginations of their penetration by male White explorers in her influential study *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995). The allusion to a colonial heterosexist discourse seems to be particularly relevant with respect to the “Virgin Islands” that were given their European name by the most (in)famous explorer of them all, Christopher Columbus. See also Strachan (2002, 30).

The advertisement invokes a historical continuity of the relationship of Denmark and its former West Indian colony and conceptualizes this relationship as “friendship.” In terms of collective memory, this testifies to the denial of colonial power relations. The suggestion that Danes are welcome in their former colony contributes to bypassing postcolonial guilt. Referring back to Sara Ahmed’s above-cited arguments about the workings of national shame and pride, one could argue that the text invokes an imaginary witness, the “people,” who, by welcoming Danes as friends, not only relieve potential guilt, but contribute to national self-reconciliation and imaginations of good-natured Danish colonialism. This is in line with Astrid Nonbo Andersen’s estimation, in her excellent article “‘We have reconquered the islands’: Figurations in Public Memories of Slavery and Colonialism in Denmark 1948–2012,” that it is not amnesia that dominates the Danish discourse about its former colonies, but the passing on of old narratives, among others, “the narrative of a legitimate colonialism” and nostalgic “happy memories” of a grandiose past (Nonbo Andersen 2013, 74–5).

White Gold and Black Slaves

The advertisements of some of the biggest Danish travel agencies support the same narratives. Colonialism, as a word and as historical reality, is used in a carefree manner in most of the tourism marketing material. The history of Danish colonialism is described with adjectives such as “spændende” [exciting] or “uforglemmelig” [unforgettable] (Bravotours, n.d.), as “kolonieventyr” [colonial adventure] (FDM Travel, n.d.), or as “et fint eksempel på dansk koloniarkitektur” [a fine example of Danish colonial architecture] (Albatros Travel, n.d.). The narrative of former greatness is easy to discern. Bravotours mentions museums that present “dansk storhed, kolonisering og forfald” (n.d.) [Danish greatness, colonization, and decay]. Colonial tropes are abundant, and the texts represent a eurocentrist point of view:

Ud over Danmark har Spanien, Storbritannien, Holland og Frankrig haft et godt øje til Jomfruøerne, men pirater og en modvillig indiansk befolkning gjorde erobringer temmelig problematiske. Alle de europæiske kolonisationer havde derfor kun kortvarigt magten, indtil danskerne fik bidt sig fast. . . . Først i 1672 kom der rigtig gang i koloniseringen. . . . Det, danskerne især var interesserede i på Jomfruøerne, var . . . muligheden for at dyrke eksotiske og yderst indbringende varer. (Albatros Travel, n.d.)

(In addition to Denmark, Spain, Great Britain, Holland, and France all had an eye on the Virgin Islands, yet pirates and an unwilling Indian population made conquest quite difficult. All European colonial nations had therefore only held power temporarily, until the Danes sank their teeth into them. . . . Only in 1672 did colonization get started properly. . . . What the Danes were particularly interested in on the Virgin Islands was . . . the opportunity to grow exotic and extremely profitable commodities.)

All texts mention slavery, implicitly or explicitly. It is repeatedly presented as the “dyster” (“dark”) side of the otherwise cheerful story. Some of the texts provide detailed versions of the role of the Danish West Indies in the economic system of the transatlantic trade and emphasize the wealth it created for Danish merchants. The stories are, however, also told from a one-sided Danish perspective and comprise colonial phrases, albeit in a slightly ironic, distancing tone. The above-quoted Albatros Travel article describes how the sugar and coffee plantations were “passet af en uendelighed af vestafrikanske slaver” (n.d.) [taken care of by an infinitude of West African slaves]. Another article sketches the 250 years of Danish colonialism as

nogle af de mest spændende i dansk historie, hvor ikke mindst produktion af det hvide guld, sukker, spillede en helt central hovedrolle i Dansk Vestindien—høstet og forarbejdet af datidens sorte slaver, der blev importeret direkte fra Afrika—mens driftige plantageejere og købmænd grundlagde store formuer, der trækker spor helt frem til nutidens Danmark. (FDM Travel, n.d.)

(some of the most exciting in Danish history, where not least the production of white gold, sugar, played a central main role in the Danish West Indies—harvested and processed by the Black slaves of that time, who were imported directly from Africa—while enterprising plantation owners and merchants made big fortunes whose traces can be followed all the way to today’s Denmark.)

The juxtaposition of “white gold” and “Black slaves” points at the interconnectedness of paradise discourse, the transatlantic triangular trade, and Caribbean plantation economies. Sharae Deckard (2009) and Ian Strachan (2002) among others explain how the memory of the slave trade and slavery does not contradict, but in fact is an inextricable part of paradise tourism. The plantation as “site” of forced labor and violence is turned into a “sight” for tourists who are assumed to identify with the White plantation owners. The promise of leisure inherent in paradise discourse depends on the exploitation, and even sexualization,

of Black laborers (Rosenberg 2014). According to Deckard, “paradise tourism . . . encourages the persistence of a culture of Euro-American mastery opposed to indigenous servility” (2009, 16).

In the Danish tourist advertisements, it is not the sites of violence or resistance that are foregrounded (as they would be in the context of “dark tourism,” where identification or empathy with victims is assumed), but the perspective of the Danish colonizers. This is true for the depiction of plantations as well as for the narrative of abolition conveyed by the advertisement texts. “På Skt. Croix,” proposes Albatros Travel, “kan man tage et skridt tilbage i tiden til plantageæraen ved at besøge museet på Estate Whim-plantagen. Her kan man se, hvordan plantageejereren boede i det smukke ovale hus, og hvordan slaverne sikrede hans indkomst i markerne og sukkerraffineriet” (n.d.) [On St. Croix you can take a step back in time to the plantation era by visiting the museum at the Estate Whim plantation. Here you can see how the plantation owner lived in the beautiful oval house, and how the slaves secured his income in the fields and in the sugar refinery].

Implicit in most texts is the presumption that Danish tourists are White and that their forefathers would be found among plantation owners and merchants rather than among the enslaved working in the fields and refineries. There is no explicit mention of shame or regret, only an implicit assumption about a collective distancing from the past. In Ahmed’s words, experiencing the site, tourists enter a community sharing ambivalent feelings of shame, regret, and pride when confronted with the enterprises of “the Danes” and their consequences. That felt community is shaped by a differentiation between “our” and “their” affects, and does not contain the pain of others (of the “infinite of West African slaves”).

Danish Heroes and National Symbols

One Dane in particular is mentioned in all texts, namely, the last Governor General of the Danish West Indies, Peter von Scholten (1784–1854). One tourist advertisement proposes to travel “i von Scholtens kølvand” [in von Scholten’s wake] and go “på opdagelse gennem historien” with “von Scholten i spidsen og Thorkild Hansens ‘Slavernes øer’ i hånden” [with von Scholten in the lead, and Thorkild Hansen’s “Islands of Slaves” in hand, on a discovery tour through

9. Thorkild Hansen’s trilogy *Slavernes kyst*, *Slavernes skibe*, *Slavernes øer* (1967–1970; Coast of Slaves, Ships of Slaves, Islands of Slaves) is a seminal critical account of the Danish slave trade.

history] (Albatros Travel, n.d.).⁹ In the past decades, von Scholten has gained the status of a hero in Danish representations of colonial history, thanks to his role in the ending of Danish slavery.¹⁰ The central position of von Scholten in the Danish discourse about the West Indies can be understood as part of Danish guilt management: the figure of a Danish anti-colonial hero, accompanied in the quote by a well-known critic of Danish colonialism, serves to assuage the acknowledgment of Danish participation in slave trade and slavery. To be guided by von Scholten and Hansen relieves the tourists' potential burden of shame: von Scholten's actions and fate seem to serve as atonement, so today's tourists can enjoy "paradise" without a bad conscience.¹¹

Such imaginations of a balanced account or reconciliation seem to be the very condition of ex-colony tourism. Returning to Sara Ahmed's argumentation, in the case of tourism to the Virgin Islands, we can see mechanisms of self-reconciliation at work. Danes are encouraged to feel pride for their forebears' enterprises, but also for their ability to self-critique. By emphasizing the work of von Scholten and Hansen, the nation's shameful past is uncovered, but at the same time, the nation is restored as "a nation that means well" (Ahmed 2014, 109). We can witness what Ahmed describes as "conversion of shame to pride" (113), where the "desire for pride" (113) is so strong that it outdoes, or prevents, recognition of responsibility for historical injustice and its legacy. Within the logic of a desire for pride, imaginary witnesses are called upon to attest that Danes are welcome in their former colony,

10. See, for example, the 1987 film *Peter von Scholten* (Dir. Palle Kjørulff-Schmidt) and his grave and memorial in Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen; <http://assistens.dk/peter-von-scholten/>. Von Scholten acted on his own authority, and defied the King, when, reacting to massive protests, he declared all enslaved people in the Danish West Indies free in 1848. Von Scholten's status as hero and protagonist in Danish narratives of the colonial past is currently being challenged by a shifting focus toward local resistance and freedom fighters. See, for instance, artists La Vaughn Belle and Jeannette Ehlers's sculpture project "I Am Queen Mary" that will anchor a Virgin Islands heroine in the public space of Copenhagen; <https://www.iamqueenmary.com> (accessed February 15, 2018).

11. By emphasizing von Scholten's role for emancipation, the texts also downplay the resistance and agency of the enslaved. The texts follow widespread patterns of Eurocentrist narratives of abolition in which White agents—attributed with authority, names, and life stories—are juxtaposed with "slave rebellions." The latter are often imagined as unorganized or even illegitimate protests, not as justified movements for human rights and better working conditions. Such narratives have been challenged, for instance, by the exhibition "Stop Slavery!" in the Workers' Museum in Copenhagen. Protests against slavery and post-emancipation working conditions are presented here and discussed as part of the history of Danish labor movements (see also Damkjær and Scherfig 2016).

whereas the examined texts omit those who could witness the caused pain and injustice (as represented, for instance, by debates about apologies and reparations that are relevant for the current relationship between Denmark and the Virgin Islands and that also form a central element of Ahmed's argumentation).

The desire for pride is manifested also in narratives of Danish exceptionalism that highlight Denmark's (relative) goodness (Pettersen 2016).¹² Stjernegaard Rejser (n.d.) provides an account of Danish history that is typical for this type of text and that perpetuates the inaccurate national narrative about the abolition of slave trade:¹³

Øerne bærer vidnesbyrd om en periode i historien, hvor Danmark agerede kolonimagt og slaveejere—et faktum, som vi naturligvis ikke er stolte af i dag. Danmark forbød dog som det første land i Europa slavehandel i 1792, og i 1848 erklærede generalguvernør Peter von Scholten slaveriet for ophørt i det daværende Dansk Vestindien.

(The islands bear witness to a period in time when Denmark acted as colonial power and slave owner—a fact that we are naturally not proud of today. Yet Denmark was the first country in Europe to forbid the slave trade in 1792. In 1848, Governor General Peter von Scholten declared slavery abolished in the former Danish West Indies.)

The Stjernegaard advertisement employs what I described above as rhetorical devices to establish temporal distance—Ahmed describes the mechanism as “cutting off” of the present from the past” (2014, 118)—and to minimize the impact of Danish participation in the slave trade and slavery. For instance, Bravotours writes that Denmark had “en lille nationalbase på øerne til handlen med sukker, tobak og kaffe” (n.d.) [a small national base on the islands for the trade with sugar, tobacco, and coffee]. The distancing and minimizing of Danish colonization often goes hand in hand with rhetorical gestures of possession or reappropriation of the islands, such as in the expression “de gamle danske byer” (Albatros Travel, n.d.) [the old Danish towns],

12. Elisabeth Oxfeldt cites Sigmund Aas and Thomas Vestgården who, in their book *Skammens historie* (2014; History of Shame), declare that “nei, det er ikke typisk norsk å være god, det er typisk norsk å ha det godt” (quoted in Oxfeldt 2016b, 14) [no, it is not typically Norwegian to be (morally) good, it is typically Norwegian to have a good time]. According to that, moral commitment has shifted toward privilege and a sense of entitlement. This shift, or double meaning, is clearly recognizable in tourism discourse.

13. The decree about the abolition of slave trade is from 1792 but included a 10-year transition period within which even higher numbers of African captives were brought to the islands. See also Røge (2014).

or the assessment, in the Stjernegaard advertisement, that “de danske gadeskilte ser hyggelige ud i det eksotiske miljø” (n.d.) [the Danish street signs look cute in the exotic environment]. Almost all texts mention signs and symbols of national belonging, such as flags or names (cf. Körber 2014):

Gå på opdagelse i byerne med havne som Christiansted og Charlotte Amalie. Lad smilene brede sig og tankerne flyde, når I læser danske vejskilte med navne som Dronningens Gade, Prinsens Tværgade og Nørre Gade, eller ser et klassisk rødt skilderhus, danske flag og danske butiksnavne. (Bravotours, n.d.)

(Go on a discovery tour in towns with names like Christiansted and Charlotte Amalie. Let a smile spread over your face, and let your mind wander when you read Danish street signs such as Dronningens Gade, Prinsens Tværgade, and Nørre Gade, or when you see a classic red sentry box, Danish flags, and Danish shop names.)

Postcolonial Brotherhood

In some of the texts, the gestures of reappropriation come in the guise of continuity and familiarity, and, therefore, entitlement. Bravotours writes: “Danskerne har også taget det dejlige rejsemål til sig, og de lokale elsker at få besøg af os. Som danskere bliver vi modtaget af de lokale med åbne arme og smil på disse øer, og et tydelig broderskab eksisterer stadig i dag” (n.d.) [Danes have also adopted the wonderful travel destination, and the locals love to receive us as visitors. As Danes, we are received by the locals with open arms and smiles on these islands, and a clear brotherhood exists to the present day]. In such accounts, the transfer of power to the United States appears as a disruption of bonds of friendship and family between Denmark and the postcolony. Also, the text employs “the locals” as an instance to testify to the Danes’ innocence and benevolence.

Finally, the advertisements connect to paradise and tropicity discourses that include as a central feature the plantation, its produce, and consumption by tourists: “Plantager, palmevifter og punch. Dansk Vestindien har en klang af det hele krydret med fortællingerne om danskernes tid på øerne. . . . Her får du udlevet drømmen om caribiske øer, der er som taget ud af en Bounty-reklame” (Albatros Travel, n.d.) [Plantations, palm fronds, and punch. The Danish West Indies resonate with all of this, flavored with stories of Danish times on the island. . . . Here you can live your dreams about Caribbean islands, which look as though they had been taken directly from a Bounty chocolate-bar

advertisement]. Paradise discourse is here intertwined with colonial nostalgia and capitalist consumption: tourists are encouraged to desire, consume, and to re-enact a colonial life style that implicitly includes Black servants—alluded to in the alliterative image—but renders invisible the human labor past and present that the colony-turned-tourist-destination is based on.

In *Paradise and Plantation*, Ian Strachan particularly emphasizes two stereotypes of Afro-Caribbeans that trace back to plantation economy, slavery, and accompanying colonial and racist discourses, namely, their imagined servility and their imagined happiness or jolliness (2002, 54, 78). Both reappear as features of a “constructed nativeness” (91) in the tourist discourse, and they are the only two guises in which US Virgin Islanders appear in the Danish advertisements; the latter in its stereotypical connection with music, dance, and colorful fabric: “Bland de historiske oplevelser med rigtig god stemning blandt de lokale, reggaemusik og smukke farverige klæder. Lad smilene danse sammen med de lokale børn, som leger til calypso-rytmer i gaderne” (Bravotours, n.d.) [Mix the historical experience with a great atmosphere among the locals, including the sounds of reggae music and the colors of beautiful clothing. Let smiles dance along with the local children, who play to calypso rhythms in the streets].

To summarize, tourist advertisements for trips to the former Danish West Indies create a sense of continuity, affinity, familiarity, and entitlement. The paradise discourse is clearly recognizable: not only by the references to a tropical garden, but also by allusions to the destinations’ consumability and Europeans’ effortless access to its riches. In terms of management of colonial guilt and postcolonial shame, the advertisements put emphasis on reconciliation and thereby establish the nation as a felt community of those who mean well and feel good: “Der er ingen tvil om, at vi som danskere i dag er yderst velkomne i det gamle Dansk Vestindien” (Stjernegaard Rejser, n.d.) [There is no doubt that we as Danes today are most welcome in the old Danish West Indies]. The postcolonial encounter with the “lost paradise” is imagined, in Strachan’s words, as “idyllic racial harmony” (2002, 71).

GULDKYSTEN: DENMARK AND GHANA

The Kingdom of Denmark held possessions on the “Gold Coast” between 1658 and 1850 (Hernæs 2017; Weiss 2013). Most of them were bases for the trade of (among other goods) iron, weapons, and

alcohol for abducted and enslaved humans, and were part of a long string of forts on the West African coast that shifted ownership between European colonial powers and local kingdoms over the centuries. Of most of the ten Danish forts and fifteen plantations only ruins remain, but the trips offered by Danish travel agencies include the major sites of the “Danish Gold Coast”: the former capital Christiansborg, until recently, the seat of the Ghanaian government in the Osu suburb of Accra; Cape Coast Castle, which was in Swedish and Danish possession for a short period during the seventeenth century; and Frederiksgave, a plantation that was recently re-erected as a “Common Heritage Site,” as part of a collaboration project of historians and archaeologists of the University of Ghana, Legon, and the National Museum in Copenhagen (Bredwa-Mensah, Justesen, and Jørgensen 2007).

Heritage Tourism in Ghana

According to the World Economic Forum’s Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017, Ghana ranks 120th (of 136 competitors).¹⁴ Tourism contributes around 3 percent to the country’s GDP.¹⁵ A recent report (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015) emphasizes the potential for growth of the tourism sector in Ghana, which remains underdeveloped despite the country’s rich assets. The report specifies three categories of assets: natural attractions, cultural heritage, and historical heritage. Most relevant for my study is the third category, which refers mainly to the legacy of the transatlantic trade. Indeed, the two “slave castles” at Elmina and Cape Coast are, second only to Kakum National Park, the most visited sites in Ghana, with 157,000 visitors per year. They have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and in the UNESCO Slave Route project. So-called diaspora tourism (or “roots tourism”) of African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans is one of the biggest factors of tourism in Ghana: travel with the purpose of

14. See <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-travel-tourism-competitiveness-report-2017> (accessed February 8, 2018).

15. According to data from the Ghana Tourism Authority, the largest group of visitors is from the United States (among them, presumably many African American “diaspora tourists” and descendants of Ghanaian migrants), followed by “overseas Ghanaians” and visitors from the neighboring countries. The statistics count 23,000 visitors from Scandinavia (unspecified) for 2014 (out of a total of 1.1 million visitors). Of international arrivals, 19 percent of visitors indicate vacation as the purpose of their visit, compared to 25 percent visiting friends and family (“VFR tourism”) and 23 percent business travelers. See “Tourism Statistics” at <http://www.ghana.travel/download/> (accessed February 8, 2018).

learning about the transatlantic slave trade and filling the gap that the abduction of one's ancestors has left in one's genealogy. Bayo Holsey, in her excellent book *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (2007), describes in detail the central role that the former slave castles play when descendants of enslaved Africans process their collective trauma. The preservation of the forts as memory sites has been pursued especially by the community of African American expatriates in Ghana, as opposed to many Ghanaians who prefer to omit the slave trade and the related stigma from national narratives.

The public memory of the slave trade appears as a prominent example of "dissonant" or "contested" heritage, due to the diversity and complexity of involved perspectives, experiences, and emotions (Yankholmes and McKercher 2015, 234). According to research conducted on residents' perceptions of slavery heritage tourism in Accra, they are marked by an ambivalent attitude toward, on the one hand, business opportunity, and on the other hand, the shame of family ties to the perpetrators or victims of the slave trade (Yankholmes, Akyeampong, and Dei 2009). The findings of yet another study, this time on tourists' perceptions of slavery heritage tourism in the Osu neighborhood surrounding Christiansborg castle, are especially relevant here. The researchers find a significant relationship between the tourists' country of origin and their perceptions of Ghana as a tourist destination with a rich cultural heritage. Compared to other visitors, a significantly higher number of Danish tourists responded in the affirmative (Yankholmes and Akyeampong 2010, 610): obviously, cultural heritage seems more relevant for the experience of Danish tourists than for others.

Asked, furthermore, for reasons to support the decision to convert Christiansborg castle into a tourist site, Danish tourists are the largest group to respond that the castle is "part of 'their' heritage" (Yankholmes and Akyeampong 2010, 611). The researchers' discussions with "a number of Danish nationals" after administering the questionnaires brought to light "the emotional undercurrents" of a confrontation with sites connected to the transatlantic slave trade. The conversations showed that the existence of descendants of Danes and Danish slaves in Osu gave rise to different yet connected reactions: while some Danes felt proud about the castle built by their forebears, there are others who would rather not be reminded about the slavery with which it came to be associated (2010, 612).

So the reactions to a confrontation with Danish colonialism and the slave trade are ambivalent, and shift between pride and shame.

In contrast to the “diaspora tourism” of people of African descent, a trip to Ghana does not fulfill the same identity-establishing function for White Danes. The studies show, however, that their connection to the place is not arbitrary; also White Danes are confronted with “their forebears” and their descendants, and with “their heritage” in the form of manifestations of their nation’s colonial history. In that sense, even in the case of Ghana tourism, the confrontation with shameful history renders visible the nation as a distinct felt community bringing together Danes via their shared shame and pride, and via the suffering of others. There is, notably, no mention of Danes of African descent in the tourism marketing material. Their presence, as well as the thematization of local slave traders and owners, would presumably complicate the affective patterns. The imagined congruence of Danish nationality and whiteness, and thus of Danes and the perpetrator/slave owner position, remains, however, so robust that it is not explicated.

Traveling the Danish Gold Coast

Most Danish tour operators offering trips to Ghana and the neighboring countries center their routes on the “rester fra den danske periode” (Jysk Rejsebureau, n.d.) [remains from the Danish period]. Only a few of the major Danish travel agencies feature Ghana; it is, instead, agencies specialized in cultural tourism and individual travelers who offer trips to Ghana, sometimes as part of a trip to more than one West African country. Out of the tourism sectors mentioned in Frimpong-Bonsu’s (2015) report, cultural and historical heritage are emphasized in the agencies’ programs, whereas natural attractions including beaches only play a secondary role. The four characteristics of ex-colony travel I introduced in the beginning—occurrence of colonialism and slavery; expressions of possession and affiliation; temporal distance; tropicality and paradise discourse—are recognizable here, too, however with implications different from the Virgin Islands example.

All advertisements stress the historical link between the two places as “mørkt kapitel i Ghanas historie” [a dark chapter in Ghanaian history] that “forbinder landet med Danmark” [connects the country with Denmark] (Jysk Rejsebureau, n.d.). In terms of mentioning colonialism and Danish involvement in the slave trade, the travel agencies give detailed information about the historical background of the transatlantic slave trade and its material traces, which is in line with the local emphasis on slavery heritage tourism: “I dag står de europæiske kolonimagters

fæstninger som fysiske påmindelser om de mange afrikanere, der blev indfanget og gjort til slaver” (Albatros Travel, n.d.) [Today, the European colonial powers’ forts stand as physical reminders of the many Africans who were kidnapped and enslaved]. Albatros Travel mentions the castle Christiansborg in Accra as “et håndfast vidne på, at også Danmark spillede en rolle som slavehandlende kolonimagt” [material evidence that even Denmark played a role as a slave-trading colonial power]. Analogous to the “Dansk Vestindien” advertisements, the travel agency titles its trip with the former Danish name “Guld-kysten,” creating an ambivalent effect of recognition, belonging, and reappropriation.

The travel agency Viktors Farmor World-Wide Expeditions is particularly detailed in its description of the Ghana trip and in its emphasis on the experiential dimension of the shared history of Denmark and the former “Gold Coast”: “I det hele taget er Ghana et særdeles spændende kulturland—og på grund af historien særligt for os danskere” (n.d.) [In general, Ghana is a particularly exciting culture nation—and because of history especially for us Danes]. As for the neighborhood of Christiansborg castle, Osu, Viktors Farmor promises to do its “bedste for at charmere dem, så vi kan gå en tur langs de gamle danske huse på vejen op til borgen. Hvis vi er heldige, bliver vi budt indenfor hos en af de danske efterkommere” (n.d.) [best to charm them, so that we can take a walking tour along the old Danish houses, on the way up to the castle. If we are lucky, one of the Danish descendants will invite us into her home].

Viktors Farmor seems particularly respectful in the encounter with the destination. The text puts Ghana and its culture first, and Danish involvement second. Ghana appears as a “kulturland” in its own right. This appreciation is missing from the “Dansk Vestindien” advertisements with their clichéd depictions of the local culture, where Danish involvement is rarely mentioned. Also the fact that it is not taken for granted that tourists are welcome in the locals’ residential areas and homes points to a respectful attitude that stands in contrast with the sense of entitlement conveyed by the “Dansk Vestindien” advertisements.

About the National Museum of Ghana, Viktors Farmor writes:

Den del af museet er viet til slavehandelen, og i den del af udstillingen spiller Danmark en stor rolle. Negativt, fordi vi var involveret i handelen med base i Accra—og positivt, fordi det danske nationalmuseum har samarbejdet med museet og universitetet om udstillingerne. (n.d.)

(One section of the museum is dedicated to the slave trade, and in this part of the exhibition, Denmark plays an important role. Negatively, because we were involved in the trade with a base in Accra, and positively, because the Danish National Museum has collaborated with the museum and the university on designing the exhibitions.)

The balanced discussion of the entangled Danish-Ghanaian history is characteristic for the announcements of Ghana tours. The advertisement text emphasizes continuity rather than distance. Also, the emphasis on present collaboration is a recurring element; this includes the aforementioned Frederiksgave plantation museum, which is part of the tours of Viktors Farmor and Penguin Travel. Similar to the “Dansk Vestindien” advertisement that refers to Governor General von Scholten and Thorkild Hansen’s publications about the Danish slave trade, some of the advertisements for Ghana trips reference the 2015 feature film *Guldkysten* (dir. Daniel Dencik; Gold Coast; see Körber, forthcoming), or, again, Thorkild Hansen. The tour operators thus make an effort to give detailed information, to make history palpable for Danish tourists and link it to the present, and to provide links to examples from literature and film that the tourists might know. In contrast to the Virgin Islands example, where I have interpreted the references as assuagement of shame, a different mode of processing shame seems to be at stake here, namely, recognition and regret. Where in the “Dansk Vestindien” advertisements, shame seems to be bypassed en route to a recovered national pride, and the past cut off from the present, the Ghana trips seem to emphasize shame as an opportunity for exchange and responsibility.

Yet it seems that the tour operators aspire to balance the tourists’ affective experience of Ghana and the collective guilt account. To this end, the descriptions of the atrocities of slavery are balanced with other aspects of what Ghana has to offer. This is where the above-mentioned third sector of Ghana’s tourist features comes in, namely, the country’s natural attractions. This is also where tropicality and paradise discourses find entrance into the Ghana advertisements:

Det er en rejse gennem spraglede kulturer med særegne ritualer og med stærke påmindelser om slaveriet og den europæiske kolonisme langs Guineabugten i Vestafrika. Men Vestafrika er også skønne strande, tropiske jungler, sletter og laguner. (Penguin Travel, n.d.)

(This is a journey through vibrant cultures with their own rituals and with strong reminders of slavery and European colonialism along the

Gulf of Guinea in West Africa. But western Africa is also beautiful beaches, tropical jungles, plains, and lagoons.)

The Viktors Farmor tour promises, too, after a visit to “slavekælderne, som . . . stadig lugter klamt af angst og menneskelig nedværdigelse” (n.d.) [the slave dungeons that . . . still smell clammy of fear and human humiliation], a stay at “et lækkert resort med paradisiske palmestrande” (n.d.) [a gorgeous resort with paradisiacal palm beaches].

The examples show that dark tourism and paradise tourism should not be mistaken for opposites, but that the two are interlinked in the context of ambivalent approaches to guilt and shame processing. In the Ghana tour, “paradise” appears as a reward for the confrontation with shame. A similar intention to balance affects can be observed in the “Dansk Vestindien” material, for instance in the headings “Caribiske paradisisstrande og dansk kulturhistorie” (n.d.) [Caribbean paradise beaches and Danish cultural history] or “Strandtid og kolonitid” (Nyhavn Rejser, n.d.) [beach time and colonial time]. Also, in both case studies, we find reconciliation as a mode and goal of guilt and shame management, namely, in the form of imaginations of family reunifications or reconnection of genealogy. Ahmed’s study makes us wary of such attempts at closure, as they might prevent responsible action against present injustices; she suggests, instead, to dwell with the uncertainty, and perhaps discomfort, of shame (2014, 119–20).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are many reasons for the differences between the sources for the Caribbean and African ex-colony destinations. Among them are the target group and the differences between travel agencies themselves. In addition, because Ghana is not as well established a destination as the Caribbean, there might be a demand for more detailed information. The experience of the two places—the social and cultural environment of the visited sites—is different. But arguably more interesting is the influence of the different tourism discourses and practices concerning the respective destinations and related reactions to confrontations with the “dark” past.

In Ghana, where sites of the public memory of the transatlantic slave trade are among the major attractions, and the commodification of slavery heritage is a main feature of tourism, this aspect is more dominant in the setup of the trips too. In the case of the former Danish West Indies, a different set of experiences and tourist sites is promoted as

part of a tropicality and paradise discourse. A “tropical tourist gaze” (Feldman 2011, 46) can be discerned in the tour descriptions that seem to re-establish, at least discursively, a colonial relation with the former colony that implies its consumption. In Leah Rosenberg’s words, this type of gaze resembles an “imperial way of seeing” that imagines the West Indies as a “fertile Eden . . . safe for tourists and investment” (Rosenberg 2014, 366, quoting Krista Thompson’s 2006 book *An Eye for the Tropics*). Excluded from this gaze of the “paradise tourist,” however, are the islands’ poverty, crime rates, and the fact that there is too little agriculture to feed even their own population—or, on a lighter note, the Virgin Islanders’ daily life.

In both cases, the Danish legacy is stressed. But there seems to be less nostalgia, pride, and carefree celebration of “our history” in the advertisement of trips to Ghana. There is a tendency to stress impact, not temporal distance. In summary, there seems to be more empathy, consciousness of responsibility, and awareness of a larger complex context and of collaboration as a path of coping with entangled histories, and possibly a path to reconciliation, in the Ghanaian branch of Danish ex-colony tourism.

To summarize, calling to mind the interconnection—in paradise tourism and dark tourism—of postcolonial and affective economies: the selling point of tourism to the Caribbean “paradises,” among them the former Danish West Indies, is the promise of guilt-free privilege. By contrast, the selling point of slavery heritage or dark tourism in Ghana is the offer of emotional work, the processing of guilt and shame. On one side of the Atlantic, we buy paradise, on the other, indulgence. Seen together, the two cases capture an ambivalence of pride and guilt, acknowledgment and assuagement, memory and forgetting, connectedness and distance. In both cases, however, guilt and shame seem to be reserved for a processing of the past, and are not linked to today’s tourist privileges and practices.

Both can furthermore be linked to narratives and understandings of Danish or, more generally, Scandinavian exceptionalism, that allocate to Scandinavian colonialism and imperialism the position of comparatively more humane practices, of quantitative marginality, or mere complicity (Keskinen et al. 2009; Jensen and Kristín Loftsdóttir 2016). To use Ahmed’s (2014) words, the examined tourism discourses contribute to bringing, in this case, the Danish nation into existence as a felt community, namely, as pursuing the ideals of meaning well and doing good. I have shown how the exceptionalist claim of the

goodness and innocence of contemporary Scandinavians might also be responsible for the nostalgic celebration, retrospective legitimization, and “desire for pride” that can be observed in the discourse about “Dansk Vestindien.”

The mentioned collaborative projects might show a way forward: to create memory sites that tell the stories of Danish colonialism not as stories of national glory or nostalgia, but as products of entangled histories. If acknowledged as such, the experience of shame might offer the recognition of historically formed and still effective asymmetries and injustices. In order to prevent re-enactments of colonial power relations, we need to hear stories of resistance and decolonization, we need contextualizations of the Scandinavian examples in the transnational colonial history of the circum-Atlantic world and the Black diaspora, and we need to make sure that the demography of travelers to the sites of Scandinavian colonialism transgresses class- and race-related patterns of privilege. To return to the definition of dark tourism from the beginning: it is vital to illuminate how the death and labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants impact Scandinavians’ lives and privilege to the present day.

To conclude, the commemoration of a workers’ uprising on the former Danish West Indies can illustrate the contested nature of Danish tourism to the former colony, and the necessity of new approaches to a shared memory culture that acknowledges the fact that what is “paradise” for one is trauma and forced or underpaid labor for the other. Laborers protested in 1878 against barely improved life conditions after emancipation. In the so-called Fireburn Revolt, which was led by four women honored as the “Queens” ever since, half of the town of Frederiksted on St. Croix was burned down.¹⁶ An NBC article quotes Executive Director of Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism Foundation (CHANT) Frandelle Gerard’s impression of Danish tourists to St. Croix:

They still look at this as their islands. Back home they are told about how the Virgin Islands once belonged to their country. . . . Unfortunately, they aren’t told the entire history. . . . The young [Danish] people ask “Why don’t you take care of the ruins? You should rebuild

16. The most famous of the four is Queen Mary, whose legacy as resistance fighter will be honored by a public sculpture in front of the West India Warehouse in Copenhagen. See footnote 10.

some of the places. There's so much lost history." . . . I say to them "Honey, they were burned on purpose! And they will never be rebuilt!" (quoted in Sutton 2016)

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