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‘A Southern man can have a harem of up to twenty Danish women’: Sexotic politics and immigration in Denmark, 1965–1979

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Abstract

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Denmark received about 15,000 foreign workers from Turkey, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, the Middle East and North Africa during a unique period of women’s and sexual liberation. As foreign men visited discos—sometimes in search of sexual relationships with Danish women—a segment of Danish men accused foreigners of taking not only ‘their’ jobs but also ‘their’ women, and depicted foreign men as hypersexual or sexually violent (e.g. in union newspapers, men’s magazines). These ‘sexotic’ depictions of foreign men had immediate and negative effects on immigrants’ lived experiences in Denmark. In gay male subcultures, ‘sexotic’ depictions of men of color served mainly to entertain white fantasies, which also affected the experiences especially of gay men of color in Denmark. Overall, sexualized stereotypes about the male Other were central to broader political discussions in Denmark in the long 1970s, including debates about Danish wage suppression, immigrant ghetto formation, and the definition of sexual liberation.

Keywords

Exotification, feminism, gay emancipation, guest-worker, labor migration, Orientalism, stereotypes, workers movement

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, many northwestern European countries experienced an influx of foreign laborers who arrived at a period that was unique in regard to attitudes towards gender and sexuality: simultaneously, various European movements promoted women’s liberation, gay/lesbian emancipation,

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and 'sexual revolution' (Shield, 2017a).¹ These youth and social movements were particularly strong in Denmark, the focus of this study, which analyzes both immigrant perceptions of Danish men and women, and Danish perspectives on 'the foreigner' as a sexual subject. The article relies on a variety of sources from the late 1960s and 1970s—foreign worker journals, social scientific studies, men's magazines, gay/lesbian periodicals, and interviews²—to explore the political contexts and consequences of sexualizing the Other. In doing so, this work contributes to the theorization of 'the sexotic' in this special issue, namely by focusing on writing and imagery that sexually exotifies the Other, by acknowledging the historical roots of these sexotic tropes (i.e. in European imperialism and the long European tradition of longing for the 'unspoiled' within the 'uncivilized'), and by emphasizing the asymmetrical political consequences of these writings and images.³

Southern European and non-European workmen⁴—usually living far away from their families—contributed to the 'sexual revolution' with behaviors that challenged norms both in Denmark and in their countries of origin, such as attending discos and having casual relationships with Scandinavian women.⁵ While foreign men and Danish women might have described each other's attractiveness in terms of color (e.g. blond vs. darker) or ethnicity (e.g. Scandinavian vs. Southerner), these descriptions did not have the political weight of some Danish men's characterizations of foreign men. A number of men writing to Danish magazines—some of whom felt that immigrants endangered both 'their jobs' and 'their women'—gained politically from negative sexotic depictions of foreign men as hypersexual, and as a threat to Danish women.

There were parallels within gay male subcultures, to which this article pays equal attention. Openly gay men of color in Denmark—who were few and far between—sometimes sexualized Danish/white men's supposed cultural-sexual characteristics, but it was largely the other way around: Danish gay men communicated their erotic fantasies and experiences about men of color (e.g. in Denmark or internationally) through sexotic frames that were meant to titillate. This second section looks at the lure of the (often imagined) man of color in articles and erotic photo spreads about world travel, and in contact ads posted by white men seeking men of color. Although both sections of this article position the sexotic as a two-way process, the article also emphasizes the uneven socio-political contexts for sexual exotification of the Other, and suggests that foreign men suffered foremost from sexotic frames.

While this study focuses on Denmark from 1965 to 1979, there is also much evidence of parallel situations in the Netherlands (which differed in part because of the significant presence of colonial and post-colonial migrants), and likely in other countries with similar social contexts—that is, booming foreign worker populations in the midst of women's and sexual liberation activism—including Sweden and West Germany. This article focuses on the recruitment period (c. 1965–1973) and the immediate years afterward, when the majority of labor migrants were solo men who had not (yet) married or applied for family reunification.⁶

The politics of (hetero-)sexual othering

Reverse gaze: *The Dane as the Other*

In the early years of labor migration in Denmark (i.e. 1965–1973), solo men—single men and men with wives in their countries of origin—comprised the majority of the over 13,000 foreign workers from Turkey, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, and 4,500 workers from elsewhere such as the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, Italy, and Greece (Mirdal, 1984).⁷ Some of these men participated in Danish cultural life by attending dance clubs, perhaps in the hopes of finding a Danish woman for a relationship or a one-night stand. As one Turkish foreign worker, interviewed for a sociological study around 1970, said about dance clubs: ‘I really like to do that, and if there wasn’t that type of entertainment, I wouldn’t stay here [in Denmark].’ When asked if he planned to remain in Denmark, he replied, perhaps with a smile on his face, ‘I can’t say that I’m staying in Denmark for the money or the women, since I don’t have either!’ (Mirdal, 1970).⁸

Mahmut Erdem (born c. 1950, Yeniceoba, Turkey), a Kurdish foreign worker who left Turkey in 1969, wrote in his autobiography (2008) that his friend praised Denmark, upon arrival, because there were ‘both jobs and girls for everyone.’ Erdem looked forward to the weekends, when he would visit dance clubs; soon, he dated a Danish woman and met her family. He wrote that for some foreign men, having relationships with Danish women was a way to learn about and participate in Danish culture: ‘[T]he Danish girls were also curious to get to know us... Eventually many found a Danish girlfriend and became part of [Danish] society’ (Erdem and Hammer, 2008: 62–65). For some immigrants, intimate relationships facilitated integration.

The majority of foreign workers’ writings did not address Danish women, or personal sexual attractions and motivations.⁹ But looking at two articles from an Arabic-language cultural journal published in Copenhagen in 1968—*Al-Ghad*, meaning ‘Tomorrow’—one can gain a better insight into how foreign men discussed Danish culture, including gender and sexual norms, within the community of Arabic-speaking expatriates.¹⁰

In one article, the author called upon readers to help craft a positive image of the Arab community in Denmark by avoiding criminality and becoming involved civically. He reminded readers that they were not merely in Denmark for the ‘chicken, steak, television, cheap beautiful blonds, and cars...’ but rather to contribute to Danish society (*Al-Ghad*, 1968).¹¹ This passage objectifies women, placing them alongside capitalist commodities like cars and televisions; the use of the word ‘cheap’ further commodifies women, as it connects their potential sexual liberalness to prostitution; and he uses the term ‘blond’ as short-hand for the (Scandinavian) Other. But the author intended for this sexual objectification to illustrate the interests of, and to parody, the ‘bad’ immigrant. Looking at other pieces in *Al-Ghad*, one can assume that the author had a more sensitive view of Danish women and their sexuality.

In another article in *Al-Ghad*, entitled ‘Denmark and the woman’ the author showed in-depth interest in gender equality in Denmark. He began: ‘Like the Great Pyramids of Egypt,’ one cannot mention Denmark without focusing on the young Danish woman, who is ‘the life force’ of the society, and who contributes to the Danish economy. Danish women were ‘athletic, quick in doing all things . . . and very economical,’ he wrote, emphasizing their budgeting skills and biking abilities. He contrasted young women’s participation in Danish society to that in the societies from which Arab readers grew up; and he never sexualized the young Danish woman (Bilak’hal, 1968).

But when the same author addressed Danish men, he characterized them as weak, lazy, and selfish: young men’s social activities were ‘almost non-existent . . . Even if he is active, he is almost sleeping . . . [and] always drinking beer.’ The young Danish man was economically sound enough, so he did not strive to work harder. With regard to sexuality, the Danish man did not respect his female partner: he ‘probably has another girl [on the side] instead of her’ (Bilak’hal, 1968). This is just a hint of the virility taunting that occurred between foreign and Danish men in the late 1960s with regard to Danish women.

The Arab author’s depiction of Danish men as both impotent and sexually unfaithful should be understood in the context of Danish and foreign men’s competing interests in Danish women. As Erdem wrote in his autobiography: ‘We could definitely hear the Danish men’s reactions: “They stole both our work and our girls”’ (Erdem and Hammer, 2008: 65). Yet while *Al-Ghad*’s article had little influence in Denmark—where only a community of one thousand could read Arabic—there were far greater implications for the negative sexotic stereotyping of foreign men.

The politics of Othering the foreigner

Sexualized stereotypes of the Other have historic roots in Danish colonialism in the Caribbean, West Africa, and Greenland; in Scandinavian race science; and in turn-of-the-century human exhibitions in Danish zoos and circuses, which sometimes provoked Danish men to ponder white women’s sexual vulnerability around men of color (Andreassen, 2015). By the mid-20th century, Orientalist clichés (e.g. of harems, dancing girls and boys, and slaves) had stepped into the bourgeois imagination via a century of popular literature set in the Middle East and North Africa (Said, 1979). But the unprecedented labor migrations from especially Muslim-majority countries in the late 1960s and 1970s provided a new context for these sexual stereotypes to take shape in Denmark.

Danish men—as the ‘third wheel’ in flirtations between foreign men and Danish women—played a pivotal role in creating negative and harmful connections between foreign men and sexual Otherness. In a 1968 article in the Danish employers’ journal, one Dane wrote that ‘Southerners’ (i.e. Southern European men, likely including Turks) ‘can have a harem of up to twenty Danish women’ (*Aktuelt*, 1968; cited in Sørensen, 1988a: 19).¹² This quotation acknowledged foreign men’s

desirability, and notably used the Arabic word ‘harem’, which would have har-
 kened to many readers’ Orientalist fantasies about Mediterranean heterosexuality,
 polygamy and male dominance over women. Further, the author intended to
 arouse fears of what could happen ‘if we continue to import foreign men’: the
 ‘suppression of sex life’ for heterosexual Danish men (*Aktuelt*, 1968; cited in
 Sørensen, 1988a). In the late 1960s, many left-wing organizations and political
 parties (e.g. trade unions, the Social Democrats) portrayed foreign labor as a
 threat to Danish men’s wages. Writing to a Social-Democratic newspaper, this
 author extended the threat of the foreigner beyond his labor power, and framed
 the ‘Southern’ man’s libido and sexual desirability as legitimate reasons to tighten
 migration laws.

In 1970, migration laws did indeed tighten in Denmark, and left-wing
 organizations and political parties began to seek ‘equal conditions’ for immigrant
 and Danish workers, so as to ensure living wages. But another problem loomed:
 the housing shortage in the capital. Not only were many Copenhageners nervous
 that immigrants would take precious housing, but also many feared that new
 metropolitan developments would result in immigrant ‘ghettos.’¹³ Thus, in
 another article to the Danish employers’ journal, a man stirred fears that immi-
 grant ‘ghettos’ would ‘lead to theft, *rape*, murder and violent conflicts, to an
 extent which bears comparison with USA’s cities’ (Fisker, 1970; cited in
 Sørensen, 1988b: 6).¹⁴ Since solo men made up the majority of immigrants, the
 author’s attention to ‘rape’ implied that Danish females were most threatened.
 One could wax poetic about how men metaphorically linked women’s need for
 protection to the nation’s need for border control. But more importantly, by link-
 ing immigrant men to sexual (and other) violence, the Dane tarnished the reputa-
 tion of immigrant enclaves, and more generally, of foreign men residing in
 Denmark.

These Danish men’s articulations of fear and anxiety about foreigners in
 Denmark related not only to foreign men’s sexuality, but also to Danish
 women’s. In the ‘harem’ example, the author gave sexual agency to the Danish
 women who forged sexual relationships with ‘Southern’ men; in the ‘ghetto’ exam-
 ple, the author portrayed Danish women as sexually vulnerable. Both texts should
 be understood within a larger context of women’s socio-political gains in this time
 period. Gender equality became a key policy issue in 1963, when the prime minister
 established the first ‘Commission on Women’, and women’s parliamentary repre-
 sentation gradually increased (without quotas) to over 10% by 1966 (Dahlerup,
 2013: 149–155).¹⁵ The most dramatic developments in women’s activism occurred
 between 1970 and 1974, when the radical feminist group Red Stockings challenged
 societal norms about women via media-grabbing protests (e.g. on buses, at beauty
 pageants, during university orientation week), and petitioned for liberal abortion
 laws and equal pay (Dahlerup, 1986: 219–225).¹⁶ In the contexts of 1968 youth
 movements and 1970s’ radical feminism, one cannot ignore that these Danish
 men’s anxieties about immigration likely related also to apprehension about
 Danish women’s newfound sexual freedoms.¹⁷

In 1973, Denmark re-opened its borders to foreign laborers for a period of a few months, which renewed many Danes' anxieties about wage suppression and ghetto formation. During this period, a popular men's magazine, *Ugens Rapport*, released a scathing 'report' on Turkish foreign workers' attitudes toward women. The magazine could be likened to *Playboy*, as it offered journalism (of a spectrum of quality) alongside soft-core erotica, and was geared toward heterosexual men. In its article 'Crime report: blood revenge has now come to Denmark,' the author claimed that Turkish men in Denmark had murderous tempers when it came to women: if a Dane were to challenge the Turkish man's entitlements over a (e.g. Danish) woman, the Turkish man was ready to kill (*Ugens Rapport*, 1973; cited in 'Mong', 1973).¹⁸ By portraying Turkish men as sexually and emotionally primitive, the author engaged in an Orientalist framework that contrasted the modern and enlightened Dane with the backward and irrational Other, through the lens of sexuality.

The author claimed to have interviewed two Turkish foreign workers, and even included a photograph and the name of one. But a follow-up piece in Denmark's foreign worker journal clarified that the Turkish men barely spoke Danish, and that they—and all Turks in Denmark—were thus 'victims' of the 'downright lie[s]' and 'smearing' in *Ugens Rapport* ('Mong', 1973). But the damage had been done: a swathe of Danish men—likely larger than the readership of the 'harem' and 'ghetto' articles—could now claim evidence to equate foreigners with sexual violence. Unfortunately, one month later, an event occurred that would seem to confirm this equation: a Turkish man did indeed murder a Dane, allegedly over a Danish woman, in the small city of Helsingør, 50 km north of Copenhagen. The ensuing events showed that some Danish men did view foreign men as a monolithic (sexual) threat; this view had severe consequences for Helsingør's foreign residents.

Following the June 1973 murder, a Danish motorcycle gang—of which the victim was allegedly a former member—led violent attacks on foreigners at large in Helsingør. The gang members and their Danish supporters indiscriminately targeted Turkish, Pakistani, and Yugoslavian men—of which there were about 2,000 in the city—by throwing Molotov cocktails, and even dragging one man out of his car, beating him, and overturning the car. In reporting on this lynching atmosphere, Danish journalists showed sympathy to foreigners and underscored the randomness of the attacks, condemning the haphazard targeting of anyone with 'brown skin' (see Sørensen, 1988b: 54–56).¹⁹

But in contextualizing the violence, some journalists inadvertently contributed to the sexotic frame that the Helsingør riots related foremost to foreign men's interest in Danish women. In one article (in *Aarhus Stiftstidende* in 1973), the journalist began sympathetically by summarizing discrimination and slander against Turkish and foreign worker groups in Denmark, but then abruptly switched tone. He cited the Danish complaint that foreign men '*had become too comfortable with the girls of the city*' as a catalyst for the riots.²⁰ The journalist could have claimed that his decision to print the hooligans' complaints was

objective journalism; but in citing their complaint, the journalist linked inter-ethnic tensions foremost to inter-ethnic intimacy—namely foreign men’s interest in Danish women—rather than to economic anxieties, or to foreigners’ experiences with discrimination in Denmark.²¹ As if to give further credence to the hooligans’ rationale, the journalist reminded readers that tensions between Danish and foreign men ‘culminated for the first time’ in 1970, when a Yugoslavian was charged with manslaughter in the case of a Danish man’s death. Though he did not cite a motive for this 1970 murder—committed by a member of a different immigrant group—he implied that there were precedents for the lynching in Helsingør. Altogether, the journalist contributed to a popular discourse that portrayed foreign men’s sexuality as culturally different, monolithic, and threatening.

The foreign male Other: Female perspectives

The foregoing examples from 1968 to 1973 are not meant to excuse heterosexual women from contributing to discourses that linked foreign men to sexual difference and danger. In an article from April 1973 about immigrant men at dance clubs, one interviewed woman claimed, ‘We won’t dance with foreign workers because they soon start getting fresh—we always say no’ (‘Hanne’, 1973). The multilingual journal—which translated the Danish *nærgående* (intrusive) into ‘fresh’ for its English-readers (and into *samimeleşi yorlar* for Turkish readers)—conveyed that the woman did not tolerate flirtatious behavior that was overly pushy. But another Danish woman in the same article said, ‘I think it is fun dancing with Turks, because they are so lively, shout to one another... when Danes dance they are completely dull and always look around to see who is dancing with whom’ (‘Hanne’, 1973). By depicting Turkish men at discos as ‘lively’ and ‘fun,’ this woman contributed to an image of Turkish men as sexually appealing. And by contrasting Turkish men and Danish men, her statement contributed to the aforementioned virility taunting between Danish and foreign men.

There is evidence that European feminists—at least in the Netherlands and West Germany—contributed to Orientalist rhetoric that linked immigrant culture to misogyny and domestic violence (Chin, 2010; Schrover, 2013). In the early 1980s, Dutch and West German feminists brought widespread attention to unfair residency laws that tied foreign women’s visas to those of their husbands (i.e. he was the labor migrant, and she entered through ‘family reunification’ regardless of the fact that she often worked). In an effort to promote women’s independence in residency laws, European feminists highlighted the potential negative effects of the laws via key spokeswomen: foreign women who remained in abusive marriages in order to keep their visa and avoid deportation. Historians Marlou Schrover (for the Netherlands) and Rita Chin (for West Germany) have shown that the mainstream media uncritically linked these abused spokeswomen’s narratives to Turkish and Moroccan culture in general, even though the intended culprit was sexism in European laws. Future research in Denmark could consider a similar genealogy in Denmark; however, the leading Danish radical feminist journal (*Kvinder*) in the late

1970s and early 1980s neither sexualized nor demonized foreign men in their two special issues on foreign and immigrant women.²²

Despite political gains in the 1970s, Danish women were still underrepresented in powerful spheres, such as parliament, trade unions, and newspaper staffs. Thus there is less empirical evidence to show that Danish women contributed to sexotic depictions of foreigners that altered political or union discussions on immigration in the 1970s. Similarly, it would be wrong to think that the Arab author's depiction of Danish men as weak and unfaithful should balance out Danish depictions of foreign men as sexual threats: far fewer Danes could read the Arabic text in *Al-Ghad* than the Danish articles mentioned in this first section.²³ Sexotic politics foremost benefitted Danish men at the expense of foreign men.

Homosexual politics and the sexotic

Radical gay and lesbian activism sought to change societal views of homosexuality in the late 1960s and 1970s by encouraging men and women to identify openly as gay or lesbian.²⁴ Immigration did not play a central role in Danish gay and lesbian political debates at the time, despite the aforementioned chatter in left-wing circles, to which some gay men and lesbian women also belonged. But anti-immigrant sentiment was not given a platform in Danish activist journals; certainly, no one argued that immigrants were homophobic, or that curbing migration would aid gay liberation.²⁵

But gay men did sexualize foreigners—less often immigrants in Denmark, and more often men of color from around the world—particularly in the erotic magazines that formed after Denmark became the first country to legalize most forms of explicit pornography. Although some pornographic publications were political, Danish journals like *Eos* and *Coq* catered more to gay men seeking entertainment (e.g. through fantastic stories) than earlier periodicals like *Pan* (which had a higher lesbian readership, at least according to those who posted classified ads). *Eos* and *Coq* prominently featured images of men of color, often tied to articles about world travel that sexualized the men of various cultures, endowing them with specific sexual, physical, and/or personality characteristics. These photographs can be seen as a continuation of the 'ethnopornographic' photography of the early 20th century (e.g. by Wilhelm von Gloeden, Rudolf Lehnert and Ernst Landrock) that similarly titillated readers with fantasies about the supposedly available men and boys of, among other places, the Middle East and North Africa (Boone, 2014: 270–279).

In speaking with Danish men who were active in gay scenes in the 1970s, at least one (born 1950) conveyed the idea that sex with a man of color was a 'political' act in that it contributed to raising one's consciousness about sexuality, race, and cultural understanding. He recalled that it was 'cool' for Danish gays to hitchhike across the USA, in part because they returned with exciting stories about 'black Americans [who] were exotic' (Interview, January 2015). But although some gay men rationalized that sexual fantasy for the Other was part of the liberatory ethos

of 1970s youth and gay subcultures, gay magazines' attention to men of color was even more superficial, and mainly served to provoke erotic fantasies. Gay men's sexotic depictions of men of color—though less violent and hateful than the previously described discourses of some heterosexual Danish men—would establish racial-sexual stereotypes that had consequences for the gay men of color living in Denmark.

The Other in classified ads

Gay men of color were few and far between in Denmark before the 1980s (or even 1990s), but a small number did attend gay/lesbian bars, participate in activism, and form homosexual social networks in Denmark, even in the 1960s.²⁶ Some of these men were tourists in Denmark; one such tourist, who identified as an 'American negro,' posted a contact advertisement in preparation for his 1967 visit, stating that he enjoyed '*docile Danes and shy Swedes*' and hoped to correspond with some before meeting up in the summer (*Eos*, December 1966).²⁷ He contrasted his own domineering self-description as an 'ex-army...prizefighter' with Scandinavian submissiveness, which is evidence that some foreigners sexually objectified Scandinavian men. More generally, this language shows that many gay men candidly described their erotic desires and identities in classified ads, and that these descriptors could elide race/ethnicity with sexuality.

But more often, white Danish men expressed their desires for men of color and foreign men with rhetoric that ran the gamut from open-minded to stereotype affirming. Open-minded advertisements included those who wrote 'race/skin color not important' (*Vennen*, March 1964), which a handful of men did even in 1960s Denmark. Other liberal or tolerant Danes wrote things like 'race is secondary' (*Pan* 4, 1971), 'color is secondary' (*Pan* 5, 1971), or 'nationality is secondary' (*Pan* 1, 1973) to other characteristics; 'nationality, race irrelevant' (*Eos*, March/April 1971); and 'regardless of nationality or skin color, pick up the pen [and write]' (*Vennen*, 1970).

On the other hand, there were some who expressed racial or ethnic preferences that bordered on sexual stereotyping, such as the following two ads, both of which were posted in English, which means they were targeted at foreigners:

SEALAND: I am a 18 year old boy, who wants sincere friendship *with a negro*. I am honest and reliable, 180 tall, slim, dark blond hair. You should not be tough and smart but be tender and a bit romantic. Please enclose photo. Meet you in Copenhagen?

(*Pan* 3, 1974)

COPENHAGEN: Two business men, 53 and 56, looking for friendship with two japanese boys (good looking)...

(*Coq* 11, 1976)

In the first ad, the young man likely had little experience with either dating men, or with meeting men of color. His provision that the ‘negro’ should be neither ‘tough’ nor ‘smart’ (likely meaning ‘smart-ass’) suggests that he had preconceptions about (some) men of African descent. That being said, his confidence in finding a lover who was ‘tender and a bit romantic’ shows that he did not have a fixed impression about all men of African descent. And like the prizefighter who sought docile Danes, this young man did not see anything problematic in eliding sexual and racial desires.

The second ad—printed in the more pornographic magazine *Coq*—calls for an age-structured relationship, as the two men in their 50s preferred to meet ‘boys’ (young men); when viewed in tandem with the very specific preference for Japanese men, their sexual desire reads as more exoticizing than the first example. The ‘businessmen’ (a descriptor that nods to socio-economic class) did not clarify their interest in Japan—such as by saying they visited for business—so one can only assume that their specification for Japanese males related foremost to sexual fantasy. Today’s readers might feel uneasy about any of the aforementioned ads that linked race and sexuality; but it is in this final ad where hierarchies related to age, race and social status intersect most problematically to suggest that one party (i.e. the two Danish businessmen) could engage in potentially exploitative sexual relationships.

Picturing the sexotic Other

In 1970, the pornographic magazine *Eos* boasted the ‘world’s largest collection of gay contact ads’ with about 350 ads per issue. The ads mostly came from Scandinavia and West Germany, but also from across West Europe and North America, and with assorted posts from unusual locations like Yugoslavia (*Eos*, January/February 1970) and Singapore (*Eos*, March/April 1971). *Eos* also showcased men of color prominently in their explicit photo sets, and presented men of African, Middle Eastern, South Asian, East Asian, Pacific Islander, and Latin American descent in its ‘Camera on World Travel’ articles.

In one article, a photo of a nude man in a turban accompanied tips on how to cruise for sex in Morocco, with commentary on Morocco’s sexual culture (e.g. ‘Don’t be naïve to think that these men [who have sex with men] are gay...’); and another article on Morocco introduced readers to models ‘Kerim and Hassan’. An article entitled ‘Tokyo’s Hot Spot’ included photos of a young, nude Asian man (with an erection) cooling himself with a Japanese hand fan. Erotic photos of three ‘Puerto Rican’ men accompanied an article about San Francisco; and two ‘Polynesian’ men featured alongside an article on ‘Hawaii’s Homophile Hullabaloo.’ These and many more examples come from various issues of *Eos* in the 1970s.

Though published in Denmark, magazines purchased photo sets from photographers around the world, such as the French pornographer Jean Daniel Cadinot. In his interview with *Coq*, Cadinot highlighted two new works

(one film, one photo set) that featured black actors, whom he presumably met like he met his other models: ‘on my trips in France and internationally, on the streets, in clubs, at train stations’ (*Coq*, November 1976).²⁸ Cadinot also provided some insights on the distribution of pornographic photo sets: although he distributed his work primarily through his own business, he was also happy to contribute to his friends’ publications, and cited eight magazines in France, Germany, and Denmark to which he supplied photographs. Thus one finds similar ‘sexotic’ imagery in other West European gay magazines at this time (see Christopher Ewing’s article in this special issue).

Sexotic depictions of men of color in gay pornography in the 1960s and 1970s—unlike the sexual stereotypes about foreign men in mainstream Danish media—were not intentionally vindictive to immigrants in Denmark; nor did they have the immediate political goal of curbing immigration into Denmark. But future research could ascertain to what extent queer people of color have felt negative effects related to these sexotic fantasies, and whether these sexual-racial stereotypes hindered feelings of belonging in Europe’s predominantly white LGBTQ subcultures (as suggested in e.g. Drud-Jensen and Prahl Knudsen, 2005; Nebeling Petersen, 2011).

Implications of sexotic politics: A night at the disco

Economic arguments largely shaped political debates about immigration policy in Denmark in the 1970s; but as this article has shown, sexotic politics—namely allegations of foreign men’s hypersexuality and sexual violence—also contributed to popular discussions of foreigners in Denmark. Future research can explore how sexotic discourses shaped immigration policy; but in the meantime, this article considers how these stereotypes shaped the lived experiences of foreigners and/or people of color in Denmark in one specific context: the disco.

Already in 1969, a Turkish worker—cited earlier for saying how much he loved co-ed dance clubs—related negative experiences participating in Danish nightlife:

If you go out dancing and find a girl who really wants to dance with you, it can happen that a Dane whispers something to the girl, and then she goes away. You feel suddenly so stupid and totally alone. I don’t know what they say to the girls, but it must be something about how she should watch out, because we are Turks, or something like that. (Mirdal, 1970: 24)

Already in 1969, this Turkish man felt that racial stereotypes hindered his ability to interact with Danish women. Although we do not know if the Dane in this story whispered something about Turks as a sexual threat, it is clear that racial stereotypes circulated in this sexually charged environment.

In Helsingør in 1973—just a few weeks before the aforementioned June riots—a Danish couple attempted to enter a popular nightclub with their Turkish friends; however, the bar’s owner had asked the bouncer to deny entry to ‘Turks’ (i.e. all

foreign workers) and thus only the Danish couple was allowed in. Shocked, the Danish couple and their Turkish friends went directly to the police to complain, and the bar eventually had to pay a small fine ('Rup', 1973). Although the bar's owner presented an economic stereotype as the rationale for barring foreigners—namely, that 'Turks' did not buy enough at the bar—one cannot discount that sexual stereotypes might have also influenced the club's door policy, as the next example shows.

An interviewee who grew up in Denmark (born 1966), but whose mixed-race parents immigrated from South Africa, confirmed that racial discrimination persisted in Danish dance clubs in the early 1980s, when he first started attending these (heterosexual) venues: 'I was refused a lot of times at the discos,' he said, on account of his skin color, as well as an influx of refugees from Iran and Iraq.²⁹ But his privileges as a Dane allowed him to confront the racism: 'As soon as I opened my mouth and they heard I was Danish they said: "OK, you can come in."' Then he added, unprompted, his take on the xenophobic intentions of the bouncers and bartenders: 'They didn't want Arab guys stealing women' (Interview, November 2014). This interviewee's experience would have been shared by other 'foreign'-looking people in Denmark, including those who were unable to ingratiate themselves with unaccented Danish, and thus were barred from bars and night-clubs altogether on account of racial-sexual stereotyping.

But in homosexual bars and discos, the experiences of men of color were often more positive. One interviewee (born 1946) who identifies as mixed-race and half-black, attended various Danish gay/lesbian venues from 1968 onward. He recalled that many spaces had locked, side-door entrances, both to keep out troublemakers and to cater to discreet individuals. Yet despite the subjective door policies at these bars, the interviewee remarked that he never 'experienced discrimination on the grounds of my skin color' at gay/lesbian bars, despite being one of the first people of color in these establishments. To the contrary, Alfred spoke of his many positive experiences with sexotic desire: 'My advantage was that I was colored and everyone wanted to try it with a colored guy' (Interview, January 2014).³⁰ Another gay-identified interviewee—who migrated from Iran to Denmark in 1984, and came out soon after—used the metaphor of being a 'kid in a candy store' at Copenhagen's gay/lesbian disco, Pan Club, on account of Scandinavians' interest in his unusual ethnic background (Interview, January 2015). While these interviewees only elaborated on the positive associations of being treated as exotic and sexually exciting, LGBT immigrants and people of color in other parts of Europe felt pigeonholed (e.g. into certain sexual roles) or alienated from an LGBT community they perceived as white.³¹

Although it is impossible to generalize based only on a few cases, these experiences at hetero- and homosexual discos supplement this article's main argument about Denmark from 1965 to 1979: that in mainstream debates, sexotic depictions of foreign men fomented widespread perceptions of foreign men as a sexual threat, which had negative and immediate effects on the daily experiences of immigrant men and men of color in Denmark, and perhaps even on immigration and housing

policies; whereas in gay male subcultures, sexotic depictions of men of color intended to titillate (presumably white) readers' fantasies, but served also to establish racial-sexual stereotypes that would shape the experiences of gay immigrants and people of color in these subcultures.

By historicizing sexotic rhetoric about Danish men in the 1970s, this article helps contextualize current debates about immigrant sexual values, which tend to conflate immigrant cultures with sexual conservatism, misogyny, and homophobia. Since the 1990s, these debates have focused largely on the alleged vulnerability of migrant women to migrant men's oppression (as symbolized by the veil; see Andreassen, 2013). But frames from the 1970s still persist: in 2016, a neo-Nazi group led a publicity stunt by handing out 'asylum spray'—faux pepper spray, actually breath freshener—to women in a small Danish town with an asylum center, and announced that foreigners threatened Danish women with sexual violence; this is the most egregious example, but certainly not the only case, of public debates that continue to portray immigrant men as sexual threats to Danish women (Shield, 2017b). Some media frames also present immigrants as a threat to LGBTQ rights in Denmark (Nebeling Peterson, 2011). And even within gay spaces, many gay men of color convey feeling pigeonholed, exoticized or excluded because of their ethnic background (Shield, forthcoming). Even communal showering has become a recurring topic in rhetoric that Others people with an immigrant background, as Danish public schools debate modifying locker rooms to accommodate the modesty beliefs held by some Muslim students (Shield, 2017a: 109, fn32). Sexuality is not always a lens for examining cultural differences; it can be a tool for asserting and magnifying these differences, and for justifying policies and social behaviors that burden the Other.

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Notes

1. Much of this article's empirical material and some analysis draws from Chapters 3, 4, 7, and 8 of Shield, 2017a. Although this article focuses on Denmark, the book also focuses on—and shows numerous parallel examples from—the Netherlands.
2. Semi-structured interviews were conducted from January 2014 through September 2015 under the supervision of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the CUNY Graduate Center. Interviews were mainly in English with some Danish. Interviewees were those who experienced the 1960s and up to the 1980s as immigrants, members of radical feminist movements, and/or members of gay movements in Denmark (and the Netherlands).
3. See the introduction to this special issue by Ulrike Schaper, Magdalena Beljan, Pascal Eitler, Christopher Ewing, and Benno Gammerl.

4. This article focuses on so-called ‘guest workers’ who came to Denmark to work in booming industries—from the mid-1960s through the 1973 oil crisis hiring freeze—and often became permanent ‘immigrants’ in the 1970s. Denmark’s foreign worker journal, *Fremmedarbejderbladet* (1971–1977), preferred the term ‘foreign workers.’ This article also uses the term ‘labor migrant.’ Importantly, many in this group were *de facto* refugees who could not return to their countries of origin (e.g. Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece) because of political or ethnic conflicts; for some, sexual cultures also factored into their migration; see Shield, 2017a: 55–58.
5. In an interview, one foreign worker in the Netherlands mentioned the ‘one-night stands’ that his friends sought. Also from the Netherlands, a 1979 survey of 280 Moroccan men found that half of the respondents attended bars or dance halls in the Netherlands. And although only one in six (17.1%) drank alcohol already in Morocco, that percentage increased to 51% by the end of the 1970s (see Shadid, 1979: 210–212).
6. For more on the ‘conservative turn’ in the late 1970s and 1980s, see Shield, 2017a: 74–80.
7. In 1971, there were about 4500 Turks, 3100 Yugoslavs, 1600 Pakistanis, 1300 ‘Arabs’, and 4500 other registered foreign workers in Denmark (figures approximate via the Ministry of Labor, cited in *Fremmedarbejderbladet*, 6 August 1971); the journal says that the Immigration Police suspected that the numbers were 50% higher for Turks and 25% higher for Yugoslavs. Mirdal’s 1984 article discusses how these male-majority migrations affected the experiences of women who arrived in the 1980s.
8. Mirdal translated from Turkish to Danish, and I have translated from Danish to English; a more verbatim translation from the Danish would be ‘I can’t say I’m staying in Denmark for the money’s sake; nor can I say it’s for the women’s sake. I have neither the one nor the other.’
9. For an analysis of Denmark’s foreign-worker journals’ treatment of topics related to gender and sexuality in Denmark, see Shield, 2017a: 87–111. For a Turkish man’s poetry on Denmark in the 1970s—though without gender or sexual topics—see Alpar, 1978.
10. At least nine issues were printed in 1968 by Den Arabiske Forening i Danmark (The Arabic Society in Denmark), and articles focused often on political topics, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts.
11. *Al-Ghad* 8 (October 1968). No page numbers. I do read Arabic, but all translations from *Al-Ghad* were made with help from acquaintance Abdel-Basset.
12. Original source: *Aktuelt* (19 May 1968). *Sydlanding*—literally Southerner—changed to ‘Southern men’ in title due to my own US American associations with ‘Southerner.’ The author also strangely predicted that the lack of Danish women would ‘lead to homosexuality among Danish men.’
13. E.g. ‘Gæstearbejdernes boligproblemer’ [Guest-workers’ living problems] *Arbejdsgiveren*, 8 (20 April 1970), cited in Sørensen, 1988b: 6. Note that ‘ghetto’ is the same word in Danish. *Arbejdsgiveren*, meaning ‘The Employer,’ was the member paper of DA, the employers’ organization.
14. Original source: Jens Fisker, ‘Velkommen Mustafa?’ featured article in *Arbejdsgiveren* 6 (20 March 1970), 34f. Emphasis added.
15. Women’s Parliamentary representation continued to rise in the next decades (and surpassed 25% in 1984), which ‘contributed to the general understanding that the country was on a route of continuous progress towards gender equality’ (Dahlerup, 2013: 149).
16. On the influence of feminist activism on foreign workers’ activism, see Shield, 2017a: 115–145.

17. Women's sexual independence was also glorified in many left-wing circles, as depicted in the fictional and wildly popular Swedish film, *I Am Curious (Yellow)*, directed by Vilgot Sjöman (1967), which connected 1960s left-wing activism for workers' rights to feminism and sexual liberality, among other social causes.
18. 'Crime report: blood revenge has now come to Denmark' [in Danish], *Ugens rapport* 20 (14–20 May 1973); cited in Mong, 'A whole nation denounced,' *Fremmedarbejderbladet* (10 June 1973).
19. [In Danish] 'Killed by a knife wound,' *Bornholms Tidende* (8 June 1973); 'Stabbed during fight,' *Aarhus Stiftstidende* (8 June 1973); 'Can't remember anything about stabbing-murder,' *Aarhus Stiftstidende* (9 June 1973) p. 18; BB, 'Young hooligans went crazy – officer burned,' *Aarhus Stiftstidende* (10 June 1973) p. 11. All accessed via Mediestream at the Danish Royal Library; all in Danish with translations by self. See also: *Aktuelt* (9 June 1973), *Ekstra Bladet* (9 June 1973), *Ekstra Bladet* (11 June 1973), cited in Sørensen, 1988b: 54–56.
20. Literally 'to have fallen too well in with the girls of the city,' this phrase implies close company or intimacy; sexual intercourse is just one possible reading. BB, 'Young hooligans went crazy – officer burned,' *Aarhus Stiftstidende* (10 June 1973).
21. On the importance of contextualizing these riots with previous issues of discrimination and racism against foreigners in Denmark, see the critique of mainstream media by Ole Hammer, the editor-in-chief of Denmark's foreign worker journal, *Fremmedarbejderbladet*: Ole Hammer, 'Hot Summer,' *Aktuelt* (20 June 1973), cited and discussed at length in Sørensen, 1988b: 56–57.
22. Based on analysis of *Kvinder* 22 (October/November 1978), with theme 'Foreign worker women'; and *Kvinder* 32 (June/July 1980), with theme 'Women of the developing world.' However, the Danish media trope of the vulnerable Muslim woman has persisted in similar ways (since the 1980s) as in the Netherlands and West Germany (Andreassen, 2013).
23. The 'fourth wheel' missing from this analysis would be immigrant women, who mainly arrived through family reunification after 1973. An interview with a Chilean woman shows sexotic framing of Danish women, in the context of anxiety about their relationships with foreign men. The interviewee referred to Chilean men as 'afraid' and as playing 'the role of the man who has a mistress.' Chilean women were sexually 'passive.' But the Danish woman was the Other: she was 'another kind of woman, the sexually liberated woman' and represented the 'competition,' as she tended to be 'gorgeous, slim, tall, fair-haired with blue eyes.' CS [Camilla Skousen], 'Most choose to divorce!' [Interview], *Kvinder* 32 (June/July 1980) pp. 16–18. For more on foreign women's activism and organizations, see Shield, 2017a: 147–173.
24. For Danish gay men and some lesbians, the main postwar 'homophile' group was the Foundation of 1948, until the early 1970s, when the radical Gay Liberation Front grabbed much attention. Many lesbians in the 1970s were active foremost in the Red Stockings.
25. Pro-gay, anti-(Muslim-)immigrant viewpoints surfaced in Denmark to some extent in the 2000s, though there are far more examples of this discursive frame (i.e. of immigrants as bad for LGBT rights) in the Netherlands than elsewhere in Europe. For critiques of homonationalism in Denmark, see Drud-Jensen and Prahll Knudsen, 2005; Nebeling Petersen, 2011; Shield, 2017b.
26. E.g. Interviewee (born 1946), quoted in final section, who came out as gay in Denmark in 1967, after moving from Germany in 1963. Otherwise, interviewees in Denmark with

- immigration background—e.g. from Turkey, Iran, Greenland—moved to Denmark and/or came out as gay only in the 1980s.
27. In English. Lowercase 'negro' in the original. Emphasis added.
 28. *Coq* (November 1976). The interview was presumably in English, but printed in Danish; I have translated it into English. Cadinot described the interracial *American Story* as 'about the USA in the 1950s. I don't know this period myself, but I have ideas based on films I've seen. The setting: New York's streets, the American dream... seen through a Frenchman's eyes, 25 years later.'
 29. Interview (November 2014). He said that he was always aware of his blackness—for example when had to answer the loaded question, 'Where are you from?'—but his experiences at discos stood out as obvious discrimination.
 30. Translated from Danish. The word '*farvede*' (colored) in Danish is not always seen as outdated, unlike the term ' *neger*' (negro). The interviewee and many others use this word in a similar way that English speakers use the periphrastic 'of color.' See Shield, 2017a: 38–39 (fn1) and 240 (fn1).
 31. In the Netherlands, the first openly gay men and lesbians of color (in the 1960s to the 1970s) tended to be post-colonial migrants from the former Dutch East Indies and the (former) Dutch Caribbean. In interviews, some were more critical of race and whiteness in the Dutch gay/lesbian scenes of the 1970s and 1980s than these two interviewees from Denmark. See Shield, 2017a: 219–245.

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