

## *Contested legacies of early modern colonialism in Norway: a summary of the 2020 debates on Ludvig Holberg and Jørgen Thormøhlen*

*Thomas Daltveit Slettebø, University of Bergen*

### *Ludvig Holberg and the slave trade*

The first real controversy in Norway was sparked in early June by the launch of an online petition titled “Remove the racist/slavetrader-statues in Norway!”<sup>1</sup> In the short text accompanying the petition, two historical figures were identified as examples of this category: the Dano-Norwegian playwright and author Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) and the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The

<sup>1</sup> This text does not give an exhaustive list of all the debates in Norway in 2020 that dealt with the legacy of historical figures from the eighteenth century in light of contemporary debates on “race”, racism and the legacy of European colonialism. I have rather focused here on two cases that have a personal interest for me, as a historian and Holberg researcher and as a native of the Western Norwegian town of Bergen: the controversies about the author Ludvig Holberg and the merchant Jørgen Thormøhlen. The Holberg issue had national scope and interest, while the Thormøhlen issue was largely discussed in the local media in Bergen, but both touched upon the contested memory of Danish-Norwegian colonialism and how it should be remembered today. The two figures have also, in quite different ways, played an important symbolic role since the eighteenth century: Holberg as a major figure in the Norwegian literary canon, Thormøhlen as a part of local memory culture in Bergen. Due to word limitations, I have had to leave out one case that could clearly have deserved mention in this context: the controversy surrounding the proposed removal of a bench in the Botanical Gardens at Tøyen in Oslo, bearing a dedication to the Swedish naturalist Carl von Linné.

<https://doi.org/10.7557/4.5908>

*Copyright:* © 2021 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

text described Churchill as a racist and white supremacist, and Holberg as having “invested in slave trade”. Both of them were “essentially racist” (“i bunn og grunn rasister”), according to the petition, and “everything positive these historical persons have accomplished is unfortunately overshadowed by the fact that they were racists.”<sup>2</sup> The petition was shared widely in social media for a few days in June and ended up with approximately 5000 signatories, almost all of them within the first three days of its publication.

The short petition text itself had the nuance and subtlety of a pneumatic drill, which is probably part of the reason why it quickly generated such a heated discussion in various Norwegian print and online media. There were essentially two main facets to the ensuing “statue debate” in Norway, as it carried on throughout the summer months. The first concerned the general question of whether or not it is legitimate or necessary to remove and/or recontextualize monuments that celebrate historical figures with legacies that could now be deemed problematic. This issue engaged politicians, journalists, historians and many others, who in op-ed pieces, interviews and social media posts shared their views on contested historical figures and the place of statues and monuments in contemporary society.

The second facet of the debate was more specifically geared to discussing the historical legacies of the odd couple Churchill and Holberg, who had been the primary targets of the petition in the first place. In the case of Holberg, a central bone of contention was whether or not he had in fact had anything to do with the transatlantic slave trade at all, as the petition text so unequivocally claimed. This apparently simple question, which one should think could be easily resolved, turned out to be surprisingly complicated. Holberg was of course never an actual slave trader like the Bristol merchant Edward Colston whose statue had been toppled and thrown into Bristol Harbour by protestors the day before the Norwegian petition was published. That is, Holberg was never personally engaged in or directly responsible for the purchase, transport and sale of human beings. But did he somehow have a more indirect connection to the slave trade? And if so, what was the nature of his involvement?

The answer essentially hinges upon our interpretation of a loan obligation issued to Holberg in 1730 by the West-Indian-Guinean Trading Company (Det Vestindisk-Guineiske Handelskompagni), in which Holberg loaned the not inconsiderable sum of 600 riksdaler to the company and, after a less than a year, ended up cashing in the modest sum of 36 riksdaler in interest. This investment itself has been known by Holberg researchers for a century.<sup>3</sup> From the 1960s onwards, it has resurfaced sporadically as an indictment of Holberg himself and, more broadly,

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.opprop.net/stats.php?id=271740> (read 25.3.21).

<sup>3</sup> Paulli, R. 1920. Til Holbergs Pengeforhold. *Holberg Aarbog*. København & Kristiania.

as an effective way of drawing attention to Denmark-Norway's participation in the early modern slave trade by way of throwing the spotlight on one of the most famous cultural icons of this period. This approach was pioneered by the Danish author Thorkild Hansen, who in his documentary novel *Slavernes kyst* (1967) drew attention to Holberg's loan to the company, underscored the substantial size of the loan, and portrayed Holberg as a jaded and cynical investor whose exit from a financial involvement in the slave trade was due to financial acumen rather than moral scruples.<sup>4</sup> While the existence of the loan obligation itself has never really been in question, some scholars and Holberg enthusiasts have since downplayed its significance and painted it in a completely different light than Hansen. An early proponent of this more sympathetic interpretation was the "grand old man" of Scandinavian Holberg research in the twentieth century, F.J. Billeskov Jansen. In an essay on Holberg's personal economy, Billeskov Jansen argued that Holberg owned only one stock bond that paid a mere 18 riksdaler in interest and that, consequently, the claim that "Holberg made his fortune through the slave trade" was incorrect.<sup>5</sup>

In part, last year's Holberg debate reiterated Hansen's and Billeskov Jansen's earlier positions. Early critics of the slavetrader/racist-statue petition such as Marianne Solberg and Professor Gunnstein Akselberg (University of Bergen) sought to counter what they described as "the myth of Holberg as slave trader" (Akselberg) and "the rumour that Holberg was a slave trader and invested his whole fortune in the slave trade" (Solberg). Among the arguments cited in favour of this interpretation were what they saw as the insubstantial size of the investment itself, as well as the tolerant and progressive nature of Holberg's literary production.<sup>6</sup> Others, most notably the historian of ideas Dag Herbjørnsrud, proposed a quite different view of Holberg that portrayed him as complicit in several Danish-Norwegian colonial ventures and slave trade, as an investor, supporter and propagandist. Herbjørnsrud introduced some new issues in addition to the now well-known loan obligation of 1730, by laying out what he described as "Holberg's five contributions to the slave trade". These alleged contributions included, among other things, a fictitious dialogue between two merchants written by Holberg on behalf of the Danish East India Company as well as investments made and business done with banks and insurance companies that also financed or did business with trading

<sup>4</sup> Thorkild Hansen, *Slavernes kyst* (Oslo: Gyldendal norsk forlag, 1968), p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. J. Billeskov Jansen, *Holberg og hans tid* (København: Gyldendal, 1979), pp. 151–152; A similar argument was proposed by Holberg's most recent biographer Lars Roar Langslet in *Den store ensomme – en biografi om Ludvig Holberg* (Oslo: Forlaget Press, 2001), p. 465.

<sup>6</sup> Gunnstein Akselberg, "Ludvig Holberg var verken slavehandler eller rasist", *Krono* 17.6.2020, Marianne Solberg, "Holberg var ikke slavehandler", <http://shakespearetidsskrift.no/2020/06/holberg-var-ikke-slavehandler> (read 25.3.21).

companies involved in the slave trade.<sup>7</sup> Marianne Solberg argued in response that Herbjørnsrud's contributions did not convincingly document any substantial connection between Holberg and the slave trade.<sup>8</sup>

Herbjørnsrud's intervention also sparked a lively and informative discussion on Holberg's attitudes towards slavery, race, colonialism and non-western peoples. Herbjørnsrud's main interlocutor in this sub-section of the larger debate was Holberg researcher Jørgen Magnus Sejersted (University of Bergen), who argued that Holberg's Christian worldview and interest in early modern natural law led him to formulate a principled critique of the institution of slavery and to promote the idea of human equality, regardless of skin color. Sejersted conceded that Holberg "accepted slavery as a historical and cultural phenomenon" and never translated his abstract discussion of human equality into a political call for abolition of the slave trade, but argued that he nonetheless should be acknowledged as an early promotor of "radical ideas about tolerance and equality" in eighteenth-century Denmark-Norway.<sup>9</sup> Herbjørnsrud, on the other hand, pointed out several passages in Holberg's essays and histories that implied that Holberg endorsed colonization and Protestant mission work in India, Greenland and Sápmi, and which displayed somewhat derogatory attitudes towards the inhabitants of these areas.<sup>10</sup> Herbjørnsrud and Sejersted seemed to generally agree on the need to avoid anachronistic readings and to interpret Holberg in light of the historical context in which he wrote, but they differed in their respective conclusions. Sejersted, on the one hand, argued that while Holberg was in many ways a man of his time, he should nonetheless be appreciated today as an early critic of slavery and racialization. Herbjørnsrud, on the other hand, argued that in order to take Holberg seriously, one must not try to excuse him but rather elucidate and critically engage with his complicity with and acceptance of contemporary colonializing projects. The debate between the two continued for a few more rounds, with some minor skirmishes concerning disagreements about the merits of Herbjørnsrud's readings of Holberg.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Dag Herbjørnsrud, "Originalkilder fra 1730 dokumenterer Ludvig Holbergs investeringer: Holbergs ukjente forhold til slavehandelen", *Khrono*, 25.7.2020.

<sup>8</sup> Marianne Solberg, "'Falske nyheter' og villedende påstander", *Khrono* 31.7.2020.

<sup>9</sup> Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, "Mer om Holberg, rasisme og slaveri", *Khrono* 1.8.2020. See also an earlier interview with Sejersted: Njord V. Svensen, "Holberg var en kritiker av slave- og rasetenkingen", *Khrono*, 17.6.2020.

<sup>10</sup> Dag Herbjørnsrud, "Om avkolonisering, Black Lives Matter og slavehandel: Heller ikke Holberg bør umyndiggjøres", *Khrono* 6.8.2020.

<sup>11</sup> Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, "Om mulige og umulige Holberglesninger", *Khrono* 4.9.2020; Dag Herbjørnsrud, "Uriktige anklager i Holberg-debatten", *Khrono* 27.9.2020:

Apart from the online petition itself, very few of the most active participants in last year's debate seem to have described Holberg as a "slave trader" or claimed that he earned his fortune from the slave trade.<sup>12</sup> And, one might also add, it seems that few of the people involved in the public debate followed the petition's signatories in actually calling for the removal of the Holberg statues in Bergen and Oslo.<sup>13</sup> In some regards, the Norwegian "Holberg statue debate" of 2020 therefore appears to have been a tempest in a teapot, or perhaps rather a bonfire of straw men. From the vantage point of only less than a year later, the intensity of last year's debate seems almost perplexing. The international context must factor in as an obvious explanation: people were clearly roused from pandemic-induced lethargy by the horrible images of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, the international BLM protests that followed, and the subsequent wave of transnational iconoclasm leading to the toppling and vandalizing of statues all over the world. All of a sudden, activists took direct action in issues that in some

<sup>12</sup> Disagreements about who had actually said what about Holberg and slavery was in fact a recurring and contested topic in the debate. See for instance Fartein Horgar and Dag Herbjørnsrud, "Stans hvitvaskingen", *Klassekampen* 19.6.2020; Marianne Solberg, "Bakgrunnsmateriale til 'Holberg var ikke slavehandler'", *Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift*; Fartein Horgar and Dag Herbjørnsrud, "Usant om Holberg i Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift", *Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift*. The novelist Fartein Horgar and Dag Herbjørnsrud also submitted a complaint to the Norwegian Press Complaints Commission (PFU) arguing that the daily newspaper *Klassekampen* should have fact-checked Marianne Solberg's opinion piece more thoroughly, or at least corrected it or issued an apology later on. They also complained about how the whole case had been handled by the editor. The commission ruled that the newspaper had not breached good press practice. See <https://presse.no/pfu-sak/143-20/> (read 21.3.21).

<sup>13</sup> One of the few explicit endorsements for removal of Holberg statues, apart from the many signatories of the petition, came from the national spokesperson for the youth wing of the Green Party, Teodor Bruu. Bruu later changed his mind concerning Holberg (although not about Churchill), stating that "[...] I shall admit that I think the proposal about Holberg missed the mark somewhat. He lived several hundred years ago, and he was not so active in the slave trade as the initial information suggested." Pål Hellesnes, "Holberg inn, Churchill ut", *Klassekampen*, 20.6.2020; The statue petition was also supported by Holberg prize laureate Paul Gilroy who, when asked by the newspaper *Khrono* about the proposal, responded that he welcomed the debate, although he did not think statue removal would solve any problems. Regarding a removal of the statue he simply responded: "That's fine". Njord V. Svensen, "Helt greit å fjerne Holberg-statuen, mener vinner av Holberg-prisen", *Khrono* 14.6.2020; the academic director of the Holberg Prize, Professor Ellen Mortensen, and rector of the University of Bergen, Dag Rune Olsen, were both criticized for having stated that they supported the removal of Holberg statues, should this be democratically decided by a majority. Njord V. Svensen, "Ta ned statue? –Da må man også ta ned Holbergprisen", *Khrono* 16.6.2020; Njord V. Svensen, "Avviser intellektuell slapphet i strid om statuer", *Khrono* 21.6.2020.

cases had been debated for a long time.<sup>14</sup> In the Norwegian context, one must add to this the blunt and imprecise formulation of the online petition, which not even some of the most active commentators on the “Holberg-critical” side supported.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps such a forceful statement was necessary to spark the debate in the first place, but it almost inevitably contributed to steering it, although not completely, towards a rather superficial argument about words (was Holberg a “slave trader”?) instead of a more substantive discussion about the links, if any, between Holberg and the colonial projects of eighteenth-century Denmark-Norway and whether these should affect our understanding of him and his writings today.

### *Jørgen Thormøhlen: A Norwegian Edward Colston?*

Whereas the Holberg debate of 2020 was of national interest, there was a more local debate going on in the city of Bergen around the same time concerning the borough of Møhlenpris. Møhlenpris is named after the powerful German-born merchant and industrialist Jørgen Thormøhlen (1640–1708), whose various manufactures (cod liver oil, salt, rope, barrels etc.) formed the foundation of the modern borough.<sup>16</sup> Thormøhlen’s involvement in the slave trade and the plantation economy of the Danish West Indies has been a topic for decades.<sup>17</sup> In brief, Thormøhlen probably owned a share in the vessel *Cornelia* that is claimed by some to have been the first Danish-Norwegian ship, in 1674, to carry African slaves to St. Thomas.<sup>18</sup> More substantially, in 1690, king Christian V awarded Thormøh-

<sup>14</sup> The British historian Madge Dresser points out, for instance, that the Edward Colston statue in Bristol has been contested, and vandalized, since the 1990s when his connection to slavery became more broadly known. See Madge Dresser, “Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London”. *History Workshop Journal* 64, 2007, p. 164.

<sup>15</sup> Fartein Horgar and Dag Herbjørnsrud, for instance, explicitly stated to the Norwegian Press Complaints Commission that they “did not support” the petition. See <https://presse.no/pfu-sak/143-20/> (read 21.3.21).

<sup>16</sup> The name of the whole area, Møhlenpris, stemmed from Thormøhlen himself. Thormøhlens gate, however, was named in his honour in the 1890s.

<sup>17</sup> The topic was briefly discussed in the local press already in 1969, following Thorkild Hansen’s promotion in Norway of the upcoming third book in his slavery trilogy, *Slavernes øer* (1970). See “Møhlenpris oppkalt etter slavehandler”, *Bergens tidende* 2.10.1969.

<sup>18</sup> Thormøhlen’s biographer Anders Bjarne Fossen claimed that this was the case in Anders Bjarne Fossen, *Jørgen Thormøhlen: Forretningsmann, storreder, finansgeni* (Bergen: Einar Blauuw A/S, 1978), pp. 45–46. His source was Thorkild Hansen, *Slavernes øer* (Oslo: Gyldendal norsk forlag, 1970), p. 23; the historian Tore L. Nilsen states that this is probably incorrect, and that “a ship [Thormøhlen] possibly owned a part in probably carried slaves to the Portuguese colony Sao Thome [...]”. Tore L. Nilsen, “Behold navnene og sørg for informasjon”, *Bergensavisen* 15.6.2020; the Danish Historians Erik Gøbel and Louise Sebro write that the vessel FRIDERICH arriving in 1675/76 was probably the first ship flying the Danish flag

len a ten-year lease on all trade with St. Thomas and St. Jan, an agreement that, among other things, awarded him executive authority over the islands and stipulated that he was responsible for ensuring an annual supply of “young, healthy Negros” to the plantations.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that a borough in Bergen is named after a figure involved in the transatlantic slave trade has indeed been pointed out in the media in recent years.<sup>20</sup> It became the topic of a much more heated debate in Bergen in the weeks following the death of George Floyd, when local politician Sofie Marhaug from the socialist party Rødt proposed renaming Møhlenpris and Thormøhlens gate.<sup>21</sup> The proposal was met with a variety of reactions in local media, many of them negative. Some commentators acknowledged that Thormøhlen was a ruthless businessman whose actions and attitudes make him quite unsavory in modern eyes, but that renaming would only help bury problematic sides of our history.<sup>22</sup> Others argued that debates about historical figures, statues and renaming are a form of symbolic politics that only derails attention from everyday racism in Norwegian society.<sup>23</sup> Representatives of organizations from Møhlenpris itself protested against a name-change, arguing that Møhlenpris is a “radical borough” with long traditions of labour organization and anti-racism that today houses a culturally diverse population that carries on the legacy of anti-racist work. The name is a strong part of local identity, they argued, and the local inhabitants have managed to redefine its meaning.<sup>24</sup> The intervention from Møhlenpris residents seems to have in effect ended the debate. Although many had publicly disagreed with the renaming proposal, for various reasons, there appeared to be a general agreement even among the critics that Thormøhlen himself was a character not particularly worth defending. Even so, a few commentators did try to downplay Thormøhlen’s role

to supply St. Thomas with slaves. Erik Gøbel and Louise Sebro, “Danmark-Norge i Vestindien” in *Vestindien. St. Croix, St. Thomas og St. Jan* (København: Gads forlag, 2017), p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> The king’s breach of the terms of this lease agreement eventually contributed to Thormøhlen’s eventual bankruptcy and downfall. See Fossen, pp. 45–46, 108 ff.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Torbjørn Tumyr Nilsen, “Gategutter”, *Klassekampen* 20.7.2018; Irene Kinunda Afriye, “Norge trenger en ‘Black history month’”, *Bergens Tidende* 28.2.2020.

<sup>21</sup> Karoline Risnes, “Arven fra Jørgen Thor Møhlen står dårlig til i nabolaget”, *Bergens Tidende* 10.6.20;

<sup>22</sup> See for instance Erling Gjelsvik, “Ja, Thormøhlen var en skurk. Hva så?”, *Bergensavisen* 13.6.2020; Torbjørn Hovland, “Ein naiv og dårlig idé”, *Bergens Tidende* 10.6.2020; Vibeke Kroken, “Reneste visvas”, *Bergensavisen* 13.6.2020; Tore L. Nilsen, “Behold navnene og sørg for informasjon”, *Bergensavisen* 15.6.2020.

<sup>23</sup> Helena Haldorsen, “Rasisme er ikke gatenavn”, *Bergensavisen* 17.6.2020; Camilla Ahamath, “Møhlenpris-debatten skygger for noe viktigere”, *Bergens tidende* 10.6.2020.

<sup>24</sup> Espen Edvardsen, Ørjan Kjerstad, Gunnar Wiederstrøm, “Bydelen som bryr seg”, *Bergens Tidende* 14.6.20.

in the slave trade. Among the claims were that Thormøhlen had only a small and marginal part, that he did not play an “active” role since there is no evidence that he engaged his own ships in the slave trade, or that his colonial ventures ultimately failed.<sup>25</sup> While these claims may be factually true, they do seem to miss the mark somewhat. Although one might disagree with the merits of renaming streets, surely the mere attempt to gain a foothold in the slave trade and/or the plantation economy should be enough to render the reputation of a historical figure somewhat problematic?

In any case, the Holberg and Thormøhlen debates of 2020 both laid bare some familiar, underlying fault lines in Norwegian public discourse with regard to the role played by Norway and Norwegians in early modern colonial projects in general, and the transatlantic slave trade in particular. Elements of the Norwegian debate on these matters are no doubt familiar also in Denmark, where the colonial era has had a similarly unstable and contested place in collective memory.<sup>26</sup> In the Norwegian context, there are on the one hand those who claim that Norway, under the Danish crown, played a significant part among European nations in the early modern slave trade, at least relative to the two kingdoms’ population sizes.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, there are those who either claim that the Danish-Norwegian contribution to the slave trade was economically insignificant and numerically marginal or, in an even stronger formulation of the argument, that the kingdom of Norway and Norwegians in particular played no substantial part in the transatlantic slave trade at all.<sup>28</sup> A variant of this is the claim that Norway played no part in Denmark’s colonial projects at all since it was itself a “colony” under Danish rule.<sup>29</sup> A problem with such claims is that they do not contribute to a nuanced

<sup>25</sup> Tore L. Nilsen, “Behold navnene og sørg for informasjon”, *Bergensavisen* 15.6.2020; See also the interview with Bjørn Kvalsvik Nicolaysen in Geir Kvile, “–Han var ingen slavehandler”, *Bergensavisen* 23.6.2020.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance Anne Folke Henningsen, “Koloniernes Spor” in *Danmark. En kolonimagt*, ed. by Mikkel Venborg Pedersen (København: Gads forlag, 2017). pp. 400–445; Gunvor Simonsen, “Fortiden i nutiden”, in *Kampen om de danske slaver. Aktuelle perspektiver på kolonihistorien*, ed. by Frits Andersen & Jakob Ladegaard (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2017), pp. 29–45.

<sup>27</sup> This position was argued by Dag Herbjørnsrud and Fartein Horgar in the 2020 debate, see Dag Herbjørnsrud, “Uriktig om Norge og slavehandel”, *Fædrelandsvennen* 24.7.2020; Fartein Horgar and Dag Herbjørnsrud, “Stans hvitvaskingen”, *Klassekampen* 19.6.2020.

<sup>28</sup> In the 2020 debate, this narrative was promoted by Marianne Solberg, see for instance “Apologetenes kolonistat”, *Klassekampen* 26.6.2020; “Norge var ikke en kolonimagt – svar til Tellefsen”; “Norges falske kolonihistorie”, *Klassekampen* 14.11.2020.

<sup>29</sup> Øyvind Andresen, “Norge dreiv ikke med slavehandelen”, *Fædrelandsvennen* 16.7.2020; See also Marianne Solberg, “Holberg og slavehandelen”, *Klassekampen* 16.9.2020; The “Norway as a Danish colony” argument was also supported by Rødt politician Mímir Kristjánsson, who described both Norway and Iceland as Danish colonies, although the former was

understanding of how Danish-Norwegian colonial rule actually functioned in the West Indies and elsewhere. Not to speak of the fact that they grossly exaggerate the extractive nature of Danish rule in Norway by more or less implicitly comparing them to the formal status and social realities in the actual colonies of the period.<sup>30</sup> Eighteenth-century Norwegians were clearly involved in the slave trade, and this should interest Norwegians in the twenty-first century. Some commentators, however, notably historians Frederik Hyrum Svensli and Trond Bjerckås, did manage to advance the public discussion in a more productive direction: the former by pointing out that many quite unknown, ordinary Norwegians unquestionably played a part as cogs in the machinery of the slave trade, as crew members on slave ships and on slave forts, the latter by pointing out how many Norwegians were profiteers, rather than victims, of colonialism.<sup>31</sup>

treated better than the latter. The slave trade, wrote Kristjánsson, was conducted entirely from Copenhagen. Mímir Kristjánsson, “Om man skal holde Norge ansvarlig, bør man se på nåtiden og ikke fortiden”, *Bergensavisen* 16.6.2020.

<sup>30</sup> Historian Uffe Østergaard’s nuanced discussion of the Danish crown’s relation to the various parts of its empire does much to clarify this issue and should be required reading for those who want to venture into this discussion. Østergaard basically introduces a tripartite division between various forms of subordinate areas: kingdoms and duchies with old historical and cultural ties with Denmark, in which the inhabitants had the same formal rights as Danes (Norway, Schleswig and Holstein), territories with a similar formal status that were nonetheless to a certain degree treated as colonies in practice (Iceland, the Faeroes and Greenland) and the actual colonies in India, Africa and the West Indies. The main reason for the different treatment of the two latter categories (with a partial exception for Greenland) was, unsurprisingly, the “race”, skin colour and ethnicity of their inhabitants. See Uffe Østergaard, “Danmark – småmagt, imperium og kolonimagt”. in *Danmark: En kolonimagt*, ed. by Mikkel Venborg Pedersen (København: Gads forlag, 2017), pp. 25–34.

<sup>31</sup> Fredrik Hyrum Svensli, “De ukjente”, *Klassekampen* 27.6.2020; Trond Bjerckås, “Koloni eller kolonist?” *Fædrelandsvennen* 9.7.2020.