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Deconsecration: Symbolic Sanctions, “Courts of Honour,” and the Cleansing of Denmark’s *Who’s Who* After the German Occupation, 1940–1945

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How may elites experience a symbolic fall from grace? Elite scholarship has typically described how symbolic structures contribute to consecrate and reinforce existing power relations. Processes of deconsecration are, however, less well described. Deconsecration as a social process is distinct from *déclassement*, as well as from cultural or juridical processes of exclusion. It is the loss of the very status as “elite.” We address the question of deconsecration through a historical case study of the exclusion of elite groups from the Danish *Who’s Who* and professional bodies in the wake of the liberation after the German occupation of Denmark 1940–1945.

Keywords: business and war, Scandinavia, trade associations, trust and social capital

Introduction

In the aftermath of World War II and the German occupation of 1940–1945, Denmark’s political and business life was purged of a number of individuals who had collaborated with the occupying force, advocated for the German or Nazi cause, or in other ways acted in what was deemed socially unacceptable ways. While historical research has focused on the postwar legal settlement, the reckoning that took place in semi- or unofficial settings within business and trade associations, political parties, etc. has been largely neglected, although those proceedings played an important role in rebuilding the legitimacy of the political and economic

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elites, which secured a transition to “normality.” This paper seeks to identify and illuminate this process, with special attention to the purge of the so-called *Krak's Blue Book*, the Danish equivalent to the British *Who's Who*. Based on an in-depth study of the editors' archive and working editions, we inquire how a number of publicly recognized individuals belonging to the business elite were removed from *The Blue Book's* pages. We do so by applying concepts inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's sociology: *reputational elites* (individuals or groups who are recognized by peers or formal bodies as extraordinary); *consecration* (the power to bestow status on an individual or a group); and *symbolic capital* (status accumulated with reference to a specific field, in this case the post–World War II Danish elite). Based on this, we introduce the notion of *deconsecration* (deriving someone of status) to describe the process of expulsion from *The Blue Book*. We argue that this concept provides a more rewarding approach than the classical anthropological concept of *the sacrifice* (eliminating individuals entirely in order to save the integrity of the community).

The impact of major external disruptions on national elites has attracted attention in recent scholarship on the economic elite and corporate networks,¹ but the issue has yet to be explored in connection with specific historical cases and in relation to more clearly defined elite concepts. When studying elite reproduction over time, historians and sociologists indeed “have much to talk about when it comes to theory and concept.”² In the Danish context, the German occupation during World War II is an example of an external shock. After the liberation, which happened in Denmark on May 5, 1945, a significant part of reconstruction was devoted to the purging and prosecution of individuals who had committed acts of treason or in other ways acted contrary to local laws and moral codes.³ Government agencies, cultural organizations, the educational system, business life, etc. were cleansed of former Nazis and other individuals who had somehow promoted Nazi Germany's cause or collaborated in other ways with the occupational regime.

Apart from the postwar legal settlement, changes in the Danish economic elite due to reckonings with an unpleasant past that had been defined by collaboration with foreign intruders have hardly been researched on a general level and only randomly when it comes to individual cases.⁴ To be sure, the postwar moral burden of Danish industry, which had acted under economic compulsion and, sometimes, domestic political pressure, was not as heavy as that of the occupier. Because of its legacy of supporting the Nazi regime as well as profiteering from armament and war and from an extensive use of forced and slave labor, West Germany's postwar industry suffered a serious crisis of legitimacy.⁵ Nonetheless, as this paper argues, the Danish business elite's reckoning with the past was guided by similar problems of legitimacy loss. However, unlike the West German experiences of denazification, which was induced by Allied occupation forces and comprised large parts of industry, and very

1. Boldorf, “Kollaboration”; Berger and Boldorf, *Social Movements*; David and Westerhuis, *Power of Corporate Networks*.

2. O'Neill, “How Should Historians Approach Elites?” 160.

3. Berger, “Social Movements.”

4. A range of the more or less well-known Danish public figures who were considered to have crossed this line are portrayed in Lauridsen, *Over strengen*. Additional mini biographies can be found in Lauridsen, *Dansk nazisme*, and in Kirchhoff, Lauridsen, and Trommer, *Hvem var hvem*.

5. Wiesen, *West German Industry*, 1–4.

dissimilar to the systematic replacement of the business elite that was carried through in Eastern Europe as a result of regime change and the presence of the Red Army,⁶ it is commonly assumed that in Denmark, the old business elite survived well and with only a few moral scratches into postwar society. The argument is that, although in 1945, laws against economic collaboration were passed with retroactive effect and hundreds of business leaders were convicted of economic collaboration (the exact number is 1,139), this did not necessarily mean that they were replaced and excluded from the business environment. Thus, it would seem that there were no serious inflictions on the general composition of the corporate elite, and so in this regard, the overall picture is one of continuity.⁷

In contrast to the German and East European experience, the Danish picture resembled that of Norway and Sweden. In Norway, where economic collaboration with Germany was extensive and had been promoted by the domestic Administrative Council, postwar legal settlements to a large extent failed to deal with economic collaborators, and consequently, changes in the business elite were insignificant. There was no wish for a general undermining of the legitimacy of Norway's business life.⁸ Sweden as a nonoccupied country obviously fared different, although there were indeed cases of industrialists being held to account for the country's wartime economic ties to Germany. One example is the so-called Bosch-incident, in which shortly after the war it was disclosed how the German Bosch company, in order to prevent confiscation, had persuaded the famous Swedish Wallenberg corporation to take over its American Springfield branch with a secret buyback clause.⁹ Although in the Swedish Wallenberg case, American interests thus seemed to have played a part, there are no indications of any foreign pressure or influence on the process of national cleansing in Denmark post-1945.

The continuity thesis with regard to postwar Danish business life would appear to be partly rooted in the fact that historiography has given overwhelming attention to formal and legal procedures in postwar Denmark, whereas informal, semiofficial, or private actions and procedures have been largely disregarded. It is an important question, for example, whether business leaders were subject to internal company purges, perhaps even losing ownership and/or executive positions as a result of their previous pro-German opinions and actions. There are certainly examples of replacements of high-profiled CEOs such as Gunnar Larsen, owner-manager of the global F.L. Smidth corporation, Thorkild Juncker, manager of the Aarhus Oil Factory, and J. C. Hempel, owner-manager of Hempel's Marine Paints, to name a few. Many of these business leaders, however, would be able to pursue a career in a different setting afterward. There is a marked difference between such tangible punishment and the symbolic sanctions that would be the result of public deconsecration in a Bourdieusian sense, from whence a restoration of one's reputation would be more than difficult—and beyond one's control.

Whereas laws were passed with retroactive effect in order to persecute individuals in the civil service, in politics, in business, in cultural life, etc., at the same time a number of organizations would carry out investigations of their own, including procedures of exclusion that targeted people who had behaved in a "nationally disgraceful" way, to use the then most

6. Ahrens, "Von der 'Säuberung' zum Generalpardon"; Boldorf, "Austausch"; Lazarević, "Replacement of Economic Elites"; Balcar and Kužera, "Von der Fremdbesatzung zur kommunistischen Diktatur."

7. Tamm, *Retsopgøret efter besættelsen*; Olesen, "Change or Continuity."

8. Espeli, "German Occupation and Its Consequences."

9. Olsson, *Att förvalta sitt pund*, 235–253.

common expression. Also, there was one in particular that would attract extensive public attention. It involved the informal publication of the country's very elite.

In its first postwar edition, *Kraks Blå Bog*, the Danish equivalent to the British *Who's Who*, with its public yet unofficial appearance, had deleted ninety-five entries or approximately 1.7 percent of its entries with no formal explanation.¹⁰ Exclusions had been carried through consistently, despite the fact that, operating out of a commercial publishing house, the editors of *Kraks Blå Bog*—hereafter *The Blue Book*¹¹—were under no official obligation to settle scores with anyone. In their cleansing efforts, the editors of *The Blue Book* attempted to confer a gleam of formality to the process, in which only entries of individuals who had actually been convicted in court were deleted. As we shall see, this policy could not be 100 percent sustained.

This paper explores the unofficial policies and processes of exclusion in the editorial work of *The Blue Book*. From a point of departure in the field of private organizations, and pointing to symbolic sanctions and legitimacy concerns, we inquire how and why exclusions were implemented. We shall be focusing on the economic elite, that is, individuals from the upper business strata with decision-making competencies that typically affected larger numbers of people in their everyday life.¹²

On one hand, the national cleansing of *The Blue Book* can be explained as a pragmatic strategy of adaption intended to uphold or restore the legitimacy of a specific elite register and its editorial board. This way, the board would acknowledge the fact that you must keep up with time and changing norms—including an emerging consensus narrative of the occupation years that clearly defined who were the heroes and who the villains. In order to grasp the dynamics of the purge from *The Blue Book*, we apply Pierre Bourdieu's elite theory. We focus especially on the symbolic aspects of this theory as we develop his concept of consecration to capture processes of deconsecration as well. We also assess anthropology's concept of the sacrifice and the way it serves to uphold structures of identity and authority in communities.¹³

After introducing the theoretical approach, we sketch out the postwar context and the purges that took place in a variety of business organizations. We then proceed to present the *Who's Who* as an international social phenomenon concerned with the reproduction and preservation of a distinct image of an alleged societal elite, followed by a discussion of the process of expulsion of ninety-five individuals from the Danish *Blue Book* and some reflections on the criteria applied in the process. Finally, we point to some theoretical implications and a couple of pathways for further research.

10. Jespersen, "Kraks Blå Bog." Both Knud J.V. Jespersen and Hans Hertel, the second contributor to the *Festschrift*, appeared in *The Blue Book* themselves.

11. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a blue book or bluebook is a directory or a book "characteristically bound in blue, and typically containing reports, records, instructions, and the like." The Danish *Blue Book* certainly lives up to this definition—apart from the fact that it is, in fact, blue.

12. To be sure, other biographical sources might serve to name the members of Danish society's elite, such as the scientifically acknowledged *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*, of which the first editions were published in 1887–1905 and 1933–1944. However, these only contained relatively few business people (10.4 percent in the second edition), compared to *The Blue Book*, whose 1944–1946 edition contains some 1,357 businesspeople of a total of 5,909 entries, or approximately 23 percent. Equally important, its third edition was only published in 1979–1984, making it practically impossible to establish if a purge had taken place in *DBL* related to war and occupation.

13. Dupré, "Structure and Meaning of Sacrifice."

Theory: On the Power to Consecrate and Deconsecrate

How may elites experience a symbolic fall from grace? How may they lose their very status as elite without losing their socioeconomic position?

History and the social sciences have a long tradition of elite studies.¹⁴ “The elite” is construed as “the ruling class” (Marx), “the power elite” (C. Wright Mills) or “occupants of the field of power” (Bourdieu).¹⁵ These definitions point to the types of resources that are available to the elites, as well as the specific ways that these resources are accumulated: control of means of production, command of major institutional orders, or a position within a historically formed field in which the relative value of societal field capitals are struggled over.¹⁶ However, elites also typically develop *symbolic* closures that lend the elite a certain “class identity”¹⁷ or *esprit de corps*¹⁸—a social group that recognizes itself as separate from and superior to the rest of society.

Elite scholars have always found business elites to be central to societal power.¹⁹ Unlike the political elite of democratic societies, the business elite is beyond parliamentary control and is to a large extent self-elective, constrained only by society’s laws and informal rules. It is, in more than one sense, a power elite. Business elites have thus been conceptualized as “hyper-agents” that are very well connected and inhabit a central place in the field of power (i.e., the central societal arena in which societal sub-elites struggle for position).²⁰ The composition and divisions within the power elite has been a major concern for elite scholars who have described opposition between managers and owners as well as between those who have inherited wealth and those who have not.²¹

In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of a number of country-specific studies of power elites in which business elites have been a central component.²² All business elites seem to be highly reproductive of social origin. However, specific patterns of access into the business elite vary according to the national contexts in which different resources or forms of capital dominate.²³ In France, educational credentials are highly important if you want to make it into the inner circle of the business elite. The social reproduction of the business elite is mediated mainly through education (*grandes écoles*), but also through extra-corporate networks such as gaining a position on the board of a nonprofit organization and dynamics inherent to the field of power (e.g., absorbing the field-specific habitus of the field of power).²⁴ In the UK, education also plays a significant role in mediating social class in

14. We point especially to the North American literature from E. Digby Baltzell’s classic *Philadelphia Gentlemen* to Susie J. Pak’s *Gentlemen Bankers*.

15. Maclean and Harvey, “Pierre Bourdieu and Elites.”

16. Respectively, Domhoff, *Who Rules America?*; Mills, *Power Elite*; and Bourdieu, *State Nobility*.

17. Mills, *Power Elite*.

18. Bourdieu, *State Nobility*.

19. Useem, *Inner Circle*; Mills, *Power Elite*.

20. Maclean, Harvey, and Kling, “Elite Business Networks.”

21. See Flemmen, “Structure of the Upper Class.”

22. Flemmen, “Structure of the Upper Class”; Denord, Lagneau-Ymonet, and Thine, “Primus inter pares?”; Domhoff, *Who Rules America?*

23. Harvey and Maclean, “Capital Theory.”

24. Maclean, Harvey, and Kling, “Elite Business Networks.”

providing access to the elite, but here the sector is closed even more around itself as fewer individuals enter with a background in public administration.²⁵ In Germany, elite schools are of little significance, but a university degree is a prerequisite (almost) for entering the business elite.²⁶ In Sweden and in Finland, too, a long-term, steadily increasing importance of higher education alongside informal networks has been observed.²⁷ In Denmark, educational credentials are less valued, as the path into the elite is determined by having the right organizational business credentials rather than educational credentials.²⁸

Much attention has thus been given to the questions of composition, reproduction, and integration of the business elite. Relatively less attention has been devoted to the symbolic aspects of business elites. Interestingly, such studies have mostly focused on business philanthropy. Here, studies show how power is used strategically to attain symbolic capital through charitable donations.²⁹ Donations work as a kind of social alchemy that lets the good glow of charity rub off on business elites in a transactional exchange in which business elites are recognized not only as business leaders but as philanthropists, showing love of mankind.³⁰ The *Who's Who* functions in a similar fashion, shining a light of recognition on those accepted into it. Being appointed a member of the community called *Who's Who* or, in Denmark, *The Blue Book* would symbolize the appointee's advanced social position, adding to his or her resources of honor, prestige, and recognition, that is, signs of status or symbolic capital.³¹ Elites are not defined solely by their position, but also by their reputation.³² Belonging to the elite means inhabiting a symbolic social space that is often for life, but in which breaching social codes may damage a member's reputation and eventually lead to exclusion.

Similarly, elite scholars have focused on ways into the elite, but paid only scant attention to the ways that individuals and groups fall *out* of the elite—and out of grace. Although there is a growing literature on the loss of power and prestige among elite members, this tradition is mostly concerned with individual cases of *scandals* and the subsequent public *disgrace*, especially in the political field.³³ One publication, however, does explicitly address the cleansing of business elites who transgress symbolic boundaries. Referring to the case of French businessperson Jean-Marie Messier, who was forced to resign from his position on the board of Vivendi Universal in July 2002, Mairi Maclean, Charles Harvey, and Jon Press illustrate the symbolic boundaries at stake within the business elite. The company reported a loss of US\$11.8 billion in 2001, but Messier's greatest sin was symbolic. As CEO, he first

25. Maclean, Harvey, and Press, *Business Elites and Corporate Governance*.

26. Hartmann, "Class-Specific Habitus."

27. Fellman, *Uppkomsten av en direktörprofession*; Fellman, "Professionalisation of Management in Finland"; Fellman, "Prosopographic Studies of Business Leaders"; Kansikas, "Business Elite in Finland"; Henrekson, Lyssarides, and Ottosson, "Social Background of Elite Executives."

28. Ellersgaard, Larsen, and Munk, "Very Economic Elite."

29. Harvey et al., "Bourdieu, Strategy and the Field of Power."

30. Harvey et al., "Andrew Carnegie"; Dean, *Good Glow*; Maclean et al., "Elite Philanthropy."

31. Friedman and Reeves, "From Aristocratic to Ordinary"; Lewandowski, "Différenciation et mécanismes."

32. Bourdieu, *Distinction*; Bourdieu, "Field of Power"; Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital"; Hoffmann-Lange, "Methods of Elite Identification," 79–92.

33. Atkinson, "On Disgrace."

changed the name of the reputable company *Compagnie Generale des Eaux* to Vivendi. He merged the company with American drinks and media company Seagram, and later moved himself and his family to New York City. He also argued that the French state requirement that 40 percent of all TV and radio shows be in French was obsolete. In France, these moves were considered acts of treason, and the French part of the board of directors withdrew their support for him. The authors describe this as a “cleansing” that, through the sacrifice of one individual, absolved the rest of the group and reinforced the symbolic power of the French business model.³⁴

The approach of this paper is similar to Maclean, Harvey, and Press’s approach, with the addition of our focus on deconsecration rather than sacrifice to highlight the symbolic aspect of the process and to indicate the possibility of redemption and reconsecration (see below). Moreover, we focus not on the internal justice of elite groups, but on groups that have specifically been delegated the task of maintaining symbolic boundaries.

Bourdieu’s concept of consecration and our further development of the term *deconsecration* offer the potential for longer-term prosopographical analyses beyond the spectacular one-off event.

The starting point for Bourdieu’s theory is the fact that society historically has differentiated into a number of fields: politics, religion, fine arts, education, and science, etc. Each field is characterized by power relations between positions defined by the volume and composition of resources—or capital in the Bourdieusian vocabulary. At the very top of society, we find the field of power, closely related to the state, in which societal elites—cultural, economic, and professional—struggle over the relative value of forms of capital or the dominant principles of domination and legitimation.³⁵

To Bourdieu, domination and legitimation are closely interwoven. In this paper, we focus on the legitimacy side of domination through the concept of consecration. According to Bourdieu, consecration is a rite of institution that legitimizes an arbitrary boundary through a symbolic act such as decorations or other distinctions.³⁶ Bourdieu’s prime example of consecration is the social magic performed by formal education, through which individuals are elevated to elite status.³⁷ Another example is the prestige bestowed upon the artist by critics, museums, or prestigious art schools. Bourdieu mentions specifically how newspaper critics in the nineteenth-century emerging literary field had the power to create a reputation and open a future for an author.³⁸ This reputational prestige constitutes a kind of symbolic capital, an accumulated prestige in relation to a specific field. Symbolic capital guarantees economic profits in the long run, but this economic relation must be disavowed in order to maintain its value as “pure” prestige.³⁹

Similar to the role of critics in the field of art, modern society’s status relations are governed by bodies such as professional boards, committees that hand out prizes and medals, and

34. Maclean, Harvey, and Press, *Business Elites and Corporate Governance*, 250.

35. Bourdieu, *State Nobility*; Bourdieu, “Field of Power”; Wacquant, “From Ruling Class to Field of Power.”

36. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 117–126.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 53.

39. Bourdieu, “Production of Belief.”

publications that track and chronicle the elite. Although such bodies often lend symbolic force to existing power relations—*consecrate* relations in Bourdieu's terms—there are also cases of *deconsecration* in which certain groups and individuals are purged, expelled, or in other ways excluded from society's "sacred" sphere. Although medals and honorary positions are usually for life—Nobel Prizes, for example, cannot be revoked—certain acts or patterns of behavior by individuals or groups may cause a reevaluation of their positions. The world of sports is ripe with such examples: Doping offences regularly lead to the resetting of records and the stripping of medals and titles. Political revolutions lead to sudden changes in symbolic hierarchies and the remembrance culture, as members of the elite are eradicated from history, statues are replaced, buildings and streets renamed, etc.⁴⁰

Although many such cases are usually tried within recognized judicial or parliamentary bodies, other cases of elite deconsecration may not follow along official lines but take place in the public sphere or through expert committees. The current #MeToo movement illustrates how prominent individuals in culture, politics, news, and other spheres experience a fall from grace, even if no legal body has found them guilty of a criminal offense.⁴¹

Deconsecration is a highly symbolic act and usually requires the deliberate and relatively short-term intervention of a set of actors. It is thus distinct from *déclassement*, which in the literature is described as a fall from an elite position related primarily to economic status and often caused by macrostructural changes such as revolution, nationalization, economic crises, or other misfortunes, leading to rapid or slow downward mobility and a more general status loss within or across generations.⁴²

Although it would be interesting to investigate long-term deconsecration processes (i.e., how criteria for symbolic inclusion and exclusion into the elite change over a longer time period), the aim of this paper is different. We aim to illustrate the process of deconsecration by showing how one society-wide shock was handled symbolically by those who possess powers of consecration. Describing this process in detail in turn opens up the possibility for studies of changing symbolic criteria for elite status in processes of revolution or regime change in which consecration and deconsecration play a role in the circulation or reproduction of elites.⁴³

Professional bodies and committees have the power of consecration whereby specific social identities are created.⁴⁴ Rites of consecration exploit existing social distinctions and provide them with a symbolic dimension (being firstborn is given a symbolic value); they institute social identities and senses of belonging or not. "All rites tend to consecrate or legitimate an *arbitrary boundary*, by fostering a misrecognition of the arbitrary nature of the limit and encouraging a recognition of it as legitimate."⁴⁵ Today, professional bodies and committees constitute media that mediate between a group and itself, reinforcing the social distinctions at its basis through rites of consecration: "The real source of the magic of performative utterances lies in the mystery of ministry, i.e. the delegation by virtue of which an individual—king, priest or spokesperson—is mandated to speak and act on behalf of a group, thus constituted in him

40. Koselleck, "Gibt es ein kollektives Gedächtnis?"

41. Atkinson, "On Disgrace."

42. Richardson, "Problem of Downward Mobility"; Hjellbrekke and Korsnes, "Nedturar."

43. Szelényi and Szelényi, "Circulation or Reproduction."

44. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*; Bourdieu, *Classification Struggles*.

45. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 118.

and by him.”⁴⁶ Scholarship on the Hollywood film industry has pointed out how consecration works through awards that act like “important vehicles through which cultural producers may internalize collective social norms about what is sacred and what is profane, and who is an insider and who is an outsider.”⁴⁷ Following Bourdieu, being included in the *Who’s Who* resembles a ceremony, a *ritus* of consecration. The *Who’s Who* board is a special case of a group of individuals that has the symbolic power to consecrate, to ordain elite status.⁴⁸

Such bodies and committees also have the power to *deconsecrate*. Just as there are rites of consecration, there are rites of deconsecration: When church buildings need to be reused for profane purposes, they may go through a process of deconsecration, in which a ritual is performed to expel the building from the sphere of the sacred.⁴⁹

In this sense, deconsecration comprises different elements of symbolic exclusion, such as *sacrifice* and *purge*. *The sacrifice* is a ceremonial segregation of the sacred and the profane. The sacrifice involves the execution (or, in our case, the exclusion) “of one who has broken the code of conduct ... who has thereby placed himself outside the ordinary realm.”⁵⁰ It confirms the identity of the group by seeking the approval of a metaphysical entity. Although deconsecration indeed involves a sacrifice, it need not involve a public spectacle, and it is a more specific stripping of status: an exclusion from the ranks of the consecrated.

Deconsecration processes include, but are not limited to, symbolic purges in which a person or persons considered harmful are expelled to maintain the status of the group. Like the purge, but unlike the sacrifice in which the sacrificed person (or their status) is destroyed, *deconsecration* is not necessarily irreversible but instead holds a specific opportunity: The process can be reversed; the deconsecrated can be *reconsecrated*. Deconsecration entails the possibility of being restored to favor like a convict having served his or her sentence (examples of reconsecration will be given below).

The most radical form of deconsecration is to be put in the position of the *homo sacer*, the lawless person that may be killed without legal consequences but not sacrificed.⁵¹ The elite outcast would—symbolically—end in a similar position: Although formally able to pursue a new career or continue the old (depending on the situation), a stigma would be attached to the person in question.

Nazi Germany—especially after the war—symbolized the ultimate evil of a Fascist aggressor and occupying force, and after its defeat clearly no one who had been affiliated with this great evil could any longer be part of society’s sacred sphere ruled by principles of democracy and peaceful cooperation. In Denmark, the official wartime politics of cooperation, however, made the distinction between sacred and evil less clear, and the post-occupation purge of people who had violated the sacred sphere thus largely became a matter for informal bodies. In this way, the case study of the symbolic persecution of Denmark’s reputational elite after World War II is telling of informal bodies’ power to consecrate and deconsecrate elite status.

46. *Ibid.*, 73.

47. Cattani, Ferriani, and Allison, “Insiders, Outsiders.”

48. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 72ff.

49. de Wildt, “Ritual Void or Ritual Muddle?”

50. Dupré, “Structure and Meaning of Sacrifice.”

51. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

In a recent article, Will Atkinson reviews Bourdieu's concept of "disgrace," challenging the relative autonomy of the Bourdieusian "fields" in which falls from grace were observable and suggesting a multiplicity of forces involving not only intra- but also inter-field dynamics, in which disgrace can occur as a result of *allodoxia* (mistaking one thing for another) or *hysteresis* (failure to adapt to changing circumstances).⁵² The latter alludes not only to "the violation of the rules of the game" but also, we would suggest, to instances in which the rules of the game have changed themselves. We would then identify a purge of the *Who's Who* as a result of sudden institutional change, in which actors find that the rules of the game have been turned upside down: What was considered perfectly legitimate, even recommendable, in 1940, was deemed treacherous in 1945.

The Legal Settlement That Failed

As we consider the fate of Denmark's economic elite after World War II, it is important to note how, in other Western European countries, German occupation policies—with a handful of important exceptions when it came to "Aryanization," transference of ownership, and replacements of managers and board members—to a large extent had allowed business firms to continue their daily operations without any direct intervention. This in turn meant that after the war, business leaders in those economies were in great numbers held accountable for the collaboration that had taken place with the occupying power.⁵³ In Denmark, on the other hand, companies shared the responsibility of collaboration with a national government that had been allowed to stay in place.

The continuation of a democratic government in Denmark was another crucial difference from conditions in Norway, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, all of whom were formally at war with Germany, and whose governments had fled and settled abroad. The cost of the policy of cooperation, which emerged from this situation, was that the Danish government also, to some extent, must meet the wishes of the occupying power. Apart from an obligation to help secure the safety of the German troops in the country, those wishes mainly consisted in providing Germany and the Wehrmacht with food and industrial products, with the evident consequence that the government encouraged Danish business life—and in some instances more or less instructed it—to meet German orders. By doing so, the government partly gained responsibility for the extensive economic collaboration that eventually took place. Even though laws were passed in the summer of 1945 in order to punish economic collaboration, the government's stance during the occupation made it considerably harder to carry out legal proceedings against collaborating firms because the accused and their lawyers could point to the fact that the government had approved of their actions.⁵⁴ When liberation came in May 1945, the return to normality had been prepared for months, and the old order was soon restored, reinstating parliamentary democracy, deregulating the market economy, and crushing any hopes in left wing resistance groups for large-scale social change. On the day of

52. Atkinson, "On Disgrace."

53. Boldorf, "Kollaboration," 11.

54. Tamm, *Retsopgøret efter besættelsen*, 474–493; Tamm, "Retsopgøret i Danmark."

liberation, a provisional government was in place, with an equal share of leaders from the political parties and representatives of the resistance, and in October, a free election was held, at which voters used the opportunity to reward the Communist Party for its leading role in the resistance, although government power, in fact, shifted to the right, where the leading liberal party had successfully declared itself in opposition to social experiments.

The postwar governments of May and October 1945, to a large degree, consisted of politicians who had been responsible for the policy of cooperation in 1940–1943 and were in no hurry to carry through a comprehensive legal settlement with the country's political and economic elite. At liberation, the political parties had already filtered out affiliates who, because of their involvement in the political cooperation with the occupying power, might jeopardize their party's legitimate role in rebuilding democracy. For instance, during the negotiations preceding the coalition government of May 5, it was agreed that there could be no appointment of ministers who had been members of Erik Scavenius's partly technocrat government from 1942, the last of the wartime governments, which had stepped down in August 1943. At the same time, the "old," democratic parties, all of which had taken part in the coalition governments of 1940–1942, were eagerly constructing a narrative of national consensus to legitimize the policy of cooperation, arguing that, although the resistance may have been the "sword" in the fight against the intruders, governments had acted as a "shield," protecting the population from German oppression and abuse.⁵⁵

To be sure, a parliamentary commission was set up to investigate whether individual members of different cabinets must be impeached for their conduct during the occupation, concluding ten years later that no inappropriate behavior had taken place.⁵⁶ Members of the civil service, on the other hand, were put through a far more comprehensive process in the so-called Civil Servants' Court (Tjenestemandsdømstolen), which saw to it that Nazis and individuals who had somehow been too eager to work with German authorities—this had mainly taken place within the police force—were removed from their posts, with or without their pension (depending on the seriousness of the offense). Approximately four hundred individuals fell victim to the verdicts of the court.⁵⁷

Expectations of a legal settlement with the business community was widespread, too, but because economic collaboration had been sanctioned by the government, lawmakers in the summer of 1945 were cautious about giving laws against it with retroactive effect with all the repercussions this might entail for the political establishment. Eventually, therefore, only business leaders who were found guilty of breaking retroactive laws against "undue initiative" or "expansion of production facilities in order to meet German orders" were actually convicted, amounting to fewer than 1,500 individuals. The legal reckoning with economic collaborators became notoriously known for hitting small fry, whereas bigger game was acquitted. Local contractors and haulage at Organisation Todt building sites, canteen, restaurant and hotel management, and deliveries for the Wehrmacht would receive prison sentences of several months, while a big building contractor such as Wright, Thomsen & Kier, which played

55. Bryld and Warring, *Besættelsestiden som kollektiv erindring*; Sørensen, "Narrating the Second World War."

56. Christensen et al, *Danmark besat*, 684–687.

57. Tamm, *Retsopgøret efter besættelsen*, 517–585; Andersen, "Retsopgøret."

a major role in the construction of the German fortifications on the Danish North Sea coast, was acquitted because of prior government approval of the contracts. The case against Gunnar Larsen, owner-director of the F.L. Smidth & Co. corporation and minister of public works 1940–1945, was dismissed because his motives for collaborating were found to be political, not economic.⁵⁸ Well into the 1950s, however, the subsequent Confiscation Laws made sure to impound a much larger number of individuals—approximately ten thousand—of profits that had breached the rules on limitations on profits that had been in place during the occupation, without actually taking those responsible to court.⁵⁹

At the national political-legal level, then, the inner sanctum of the temple was considered to have remained untouched, even as the enemy had forced its way into the temple: The principles of parliamentary democracy and a class-spanning consensus on the regulated market economy remained unscathed, but that was not the end of it.

The failure to carry out a legal settlement “from top to the bottom,” to use a popular expression of the time, is probably what motivated publishers, organizations, and associations to initiate a process of deconsecration themselves. Many chose to use this opportunity to deal with those who had gone “too far” in their relations with the Germans, and had for some reason escaped legal retribution. As in France, in Denmark one can make a distinction between an *épuration judiciaire* and an *épuration professionnelle*, that is, a legally based settlement on the one hand and, on the other, the self-regulation or self-policing that took place in the professions among members of particular organizations, associations, and firms.⁶⁰ If hardly any legal responsibility could be placed, perhaps it would be possible to at least place a moral and symbolic one? It was now up to civil society to decide whether to instigate proceedings to weed out people from their midst who had behaved in an illegitimate, that is, inappropriate, unnecessary, or unwanted way (however defined), applying not legal but moral criteria for potential exclusions.

Nowhere was the exclusion more exposed than in the most authoritative stocktaking of Danish society’s elite: *Krak’s Blue Book*. In *Krak’s Blue Book*, purges could be taken to the top.

Who’s Who: Identifying and Reproducing Society’s Elite

Krak’s Blue Book has been published annually since 1910 (except 1944–1945) by the Krak Foundation (in recent years Gads publishing house), containing mini biographies of well-known and/or important Danes. For 113 years, *The Blue Book* has repeatedly told the Danish population who belonged to society’s elite. The (unnamed) editors’ decisions are based on the advice and evaluations of “knowledgeable men from various circles,”⁶¹ an unknown number of consultants, who are most likely also unknown to one another, and whose names are never disclosed to the public. Consultants are selected (we must presume) because of their specific knowledge of specific organizational fields of Danish society and the individuals that occupy

58. Tamm, *Retsopgøret efter besættelsen*, 474–485.

59. *Ibid.*, 495–498.

60. Barjot, “Die politische Säuberung.”

61. “... kyndige mænd fra forskellige kredse.” Preface to the first edition, May 1910.



Figure 1. Translation: Today's Tragedy. Today Krak's Blue Book is published. "Not this time either?" From the leading daily newspaper, *Nationaltidende*, May 31, 1939.

leading positions there. Considered as an instrument of mutual recognition within the elite, *The Blue Book* works as a way of achieving identity, legitimacy, and credibility. Each year's new edition has been followed with keen public interest, as newspapers keep a close eye on who has been admitted this time—and who hasn't. *The Blue Book's* circulation numbers, however, are never published.

Identifying and announcing the upper echelons of society is a tradition that stems from the modernizing British class society of the mid-1800s: The inspiration came from the British *Who's Who*.⁶² *Who's Who*, the well-known record of contemporary persons of importance to British society, is commonly regarded as UK's Hall of Fame, yet there is no comprehensive

62. Jespersen, "Kraks Blå Bog"; preface to the first edition, May 1910, quoted in Dahl, *Festskrift for Kraks Blå Bog*.

survey of its history. Since its first edition in 1849, it has reflected a specific concept of who deserved to be included in society's elite and how the elite preferred to see and present itself. The *Who's Who* "plays a uniquely performative role in reflecting and actively constructing a national British elite widely recognized throughout British society."⁶³

At the same time, *Who's Who* reflects how criteria for admission to the elite have changed over time. *Who's Who* illustrates how modernity has pervaded and changed the notion of elite itself. Feudal society's formal hierarchies and lines of command saw to it that hardly anyone outside the king's castle, the nobility, the church, or the military could ever be considered part of the elite. *Who's Who*'s first edition still reflected the hierarchy of the old days, listing "ranks and appointments and the names of those holding them," including the Royal Household, members of the House of Peers and House of Commons, judges, archbishops, and British envoys abroad.⁶⁴ Since then, the scope of entries has changed and expanded significantly. The emergence of the modern state paved the way for a new influential group of educated civil servants and their educators at the universities, and the rise of capitalism created a need for merchants, manufacturers, and bankers to be acknowledged for their societal significance and to be equipped with symbols of recognition: Bourdieu's "symbolic representation." At the beginning of the twentieth century, the changing view of who ought to be considered part of the elite eventually made its way to *Who's Who*, and the publication currently contains autobiographical entries of more than thirty-five thousand people "from around the globe who have an impact on British life, including senior politicians, judges, civil servants, and notable figures from the arts, academia, and other areas..."⁶⁵

Who's Who has thus become a global work of reference to not only important British nationals but "people who influence British life," people characterized by "perceived prominence in public life or professional achievement" and "a considerable level of prestige" (Wikipedia). In short, according to the *Times*, "*Who's Who* is a mirror in which society glimpses a reflection of its own achievement."⁶⁶

Without substantial reservations, this assessment would apply to other countries that have adopted the idea of a public, yet unofficial, display of notable and respectable figures, establishing who belongs to the elite and who does not. Whether to regard *Who's Who* as the ultimate book of snobbery, an expression of bourgeois equality ideals, a symbol of the open society or of social mobility, or simply as an expression of society's rapid process of modernization at the time, would seem a matter of individual taste.⁶⁷ In Denmark, *The Blue Book* certainly symbolized the fundamental elite change that took place in the early 1900s, "as the old pyramid of estates, which had dominated Danish society for centuries, finally collapsed, to be replaced by what one might call a plural elite structure based on the individual citizen's personal effort and achievements."⁶⁸

Like in the UK, Denmark's *Blue Book* should thus be viewed as a bourgeois response to the redundant class of noblemen and big landowners, who had begun publishing their personal

63. Reeves et al, "Decline and Persistence of the Old Boy," 1146.

64. *Who's Who 2023 & Who Was Who*, "Welcome to *Who's Who 2023*."

65. *Ibid*.

66. *Who's Who 2023 & Who Was Who*, "About."

67. Hertel, "Snobbernes bog?" 13–24.

68. Jespersen, "Kraks Blå Bog," 32.

information in the *Yearbook of the Danish Nobility (Danmarks Adels Årbog)* from 1884. Contrary to the nobility's yearbook, with its deep-red cover, *The Blue Book* would be based on meritocratic principles, not on heritage and bloodlines—although the much-heralded breakthrough of social mobility it was supposed to symbolize should be taken with a grain of salt, as social legacy continued to play an important role because of inheritance of fortunes, inequality of education, etc. The educated elite—the *Bildungsbürgertum*—was taking the place of the landed aristocracy.⁶⁹

The United States saw its first edition in 1899; among the Nordic countries, Finland moved first (1909), followed by Denmark (1910), although this country had already seen a predecessor, the somewhat randomly compiled *Guide to the Elite (Elite-Vejviseren)* in 1907 and 1908.⁷⁰ Sweden and Norway followed suit in 1912; France, notably, did not join the trend until 1953.⁷¹ In Germany, the first edition of *Wer ist's* was published in 1905, although the subsequent editions did not appear every year like its British counterpart, but only reached bookstores in 1906, 1908, 1909, 1911, 1912, 1914, 1922, 1928, and 1935. The increasing intervals and eventual *Stillegung* a few years into the Nazi era perhaps made it easier to reinvent the publication in 1951 with a new publisher and under a new name, *Wer ist wer?*, stripped of the previous elite of Nazi officials and other convicted and compromised figures of the recent past.⁷² *Wer ist wer?* was discontinued in 2015/2017.

The *Wer ist wer?* case of public cleansing points us in the direction of the Danish case, in which the aftermath of the five years of German occupation stands out and public figures were scrutinized and sometimes punished for their words and deeds in 1940–1945. How did the editors of *The Blue Book* respond to the presumed expectations of Danish society after five years of occupation and collaboration?

The Blue Book: Processes of Deconsecration

The German occupation of 1940–1945 posed a serious challenge to the editors of *The Blue Book*, who had to work out a delicate balance between maintaining the entries of respectable Danes who were unpopular with the German authorities and, in order to avoid German intervention, not deleting entries of prominent Nazis. Well-known critics of Germany and of Nazism were published throughout the occupation, whereas a number of big landowners with Nazi affiliations, as well as the editor of the Nazi daily *Fædrelandet*, kept their places. Olga Eggers on the other hand, a prominent Nazi author, had her entry deleted in 1943 after being convicted of racism, whereas the leader of the Nazi Party, Frits Clausen, was never published. Based on the deletion of Eggers, in 1943, Danish Nazis launched a campaign to

69. *Ibid.*, 38.

70. Tarbensen, "Grever, politikere og kaffebrændere var en del af eliten," *Politiken*, January 5, 2016.

71. Lewandowski, "Différenciation et mécanismes"; Gourvenec, "Who's Who in France."

72. Enzyklothek Historische Nachschlagewerke, "Wer ist's?" The Nazi elite had its own *Who's Who* with *Das deutsche Führerlexikon* (Berlin 1934–1935) and would reappear in a somewhat different context, first in Erich Stockhorst's apologetic *Fünftausend Köpfe. Wer war wer im Dritten Reich* (1967), and later in the scholarly editions by Robert S. Wistrich, *Who's Who in Nazi Germany* (1982), Hermann Weiss, *Biographisches Lexikon zum Dritten Reich* (1998), and Ernst Klee, *Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich* (2003).

purge *The Blue Book* of Jewish individuals, and after the German action in October to deport Denmark's Jews, the situation became increasingly untenable. The editors suspected that the next edition of *The Blue Book* would be subjected to censorship that would entail both a purge of Jewish entries and an increase of prominent Nazis and decided to cancel work on the 1944 edition.⁷³

Liberation in 1945 did not mean that the difficult work was over. When the first postwar edition of *The Blue Book* was published in September 1946, apart from those names that had disappeared for natural reasons, of the 5,729 entries in the 1943 edition, 95 entries were gone. There were no lists of names that had been deleted, not even an announcement of the changes that had taken place. Like on a manipulated photo from Stalin's Soviet Union, they had just disappeared; they simply did not exist anymore. The curious reader might compare with previous editions to find out who had been deleted—"de-elited"—or, in fact, deconsecrated. After all, in contrast to the silently manipulated Soviet photos, *The Blue Book* deconsecration was quite public. The publication of each edition was covered in local and national papers, and it was noted who was no longer listed in the publication. As far from the Soviet spectacle of the orchestrated public sacrifice as from that same Union's quiet rewriting of history, *The Blue Book* deconsecration process was publicly reported.

The Blue Book deconsecration of compromised individuals appears to have been the result of a thorough, systematic, and complex process, initiated sometime in 1943 or 1944. It would build on a method that was fixed long before the war. Each year, along with the official edition of *The Blue Book*, a special copy was printed for the editorial board only. This was the so-called editors' copy, often referred to as the "working copy" (*arbejdseksemplaret*),⁷⁴ a special copy that instead of one volume would now constitute two because every other page was left blank. On those blank pages, the editors would note pieces of information on particular entries that had been gathered during the year and then sort out which information was to be included in next year's edition of *The Blue Book*. Looking into the post-1945 purge of *The Blue Book*, the working copy of the 1943 and the 1944–1946 edition are our main sources.

Three slips of paper inserted into the 1943 working copy tell what had happened.

The first one, dated January 15, 1946, simply states that 483 individuals from the 1943 issue are now deceased (the number had further increased by the time the editing work was completed in late summer). The second one encloses cuttings from the newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* from July 14 and October 7, 1945, which give the names of those who had been appointed members of the Joint Council of the Resistance Movement (Frihedsbevægelsens Samråd), which comprised previous members of Denmark's Freedom Council (Danmarks Frihedsråd) and representatives from the largest resistance organizations; apparently, the enormous symbolic capital attached to the resistance had been sufficient to admit its leaders into the high society of *The Blue Book*. To the former members of the Freedom Council, another five were added. A few resistance leaders joined the club. The third slip of paper is a list of five judges, a lawyer, and a professor of law, whom the Ministry of Justice had assigned to the board of appeal concerning the trials against traitors. The list set the scene for the coming purge.

73. Jespersen, "Kraks Blå Bog," 40–47.

74. "Retired envoys and consuls, see working copy 1942" (Afskedigede gesandter og konsulere, se Arbejdsbog 1942). Quoted from the blank pages at the end of the 1943 working copy.

The final editorial work of the first postwar issue of *The Blue Book* took place between April and June 1946, and the volume was published a few weeks later. As mentioned, the 1944–1946 issue contained 5,736 entries, an increase of 7 compared to the 1943 issue. As tradition had it, only “Danish men and women alive” were published, and because of the relatively long time that had passed since the previous issue, changes were bigger than usual. In fact, there were 703 new entries compared to the previous edition, corresponding to a replacement of 12 percent.⁷⁵

This was an extraordinary amount of replacements, and it was not only due to natural causes. (In addition, “natural causes”—death—were not always natural, such as in the case of one particular deletion: a local chief of police, who had died in a concentration camp in Germany in 1944, seemingly the only resistance casualty among *Blue Book* “members”.) Others had, by passing away, evaded the humiliation of being deleted from *The Blue Book*: These included the director of the Danish Red Cross, who was suspected of treason, and a big landowner, who had acted as a National Socialist agitator. A number of *Blue Book* individuals who had been publicly denounced for Nazi sympathies or collaboration cleared their names by suing for defamation. Others were acquitted after being charged in court. A few had been deleted according to their own wishes; others had been excluded because of ordinary court convictions for tax evasion, fraud—or illegal profits on selling whisky.

Apart from all of this, 95 individuals—still alive—were missing, or approximately 1.7 percent of the 1943 entries.⁷⁶ The notes in the 1943 working edition reveal what had taken place. In their handwritten margin notes, the editors refer to two lists. One is the so-called freeze list (*spærrelisten*), which seems to be worked out by the editors and identical with a list of 164 names under the heading “special candidates” (*særlige emner*), which appears on the blank pages at the end of the volume reserved for “candidates to be deleted” (*sletteemner*). The “freeze list” contains the names of persons who were arrested after the liberation and must therefore be given special attention. At each entry is written: “Arrested after 5.5.45.”

The other list referred to in the margin notes targets business leaders specifically: This is the so-called list of economic collaborators (*Værnemagerlisten*). This list does not appear in the working copy, but the editors made references to it in the margin notes of the 1943 working copy, including a unique number for each entry. The list may very well be based on records from Denmark’s Central Bank, which were published in *Statstidende*, the official daily publication of the central administration. *Statstidende* meticulously listed which accounts had been frozen because of suspicions of economic collaboration or pending court trials.⁷⁷

The handwritten notes and comments in the working copies of the 1943 edition show us how the editors were closely following individual cases in the press and in *Statstidende*. They also reveal three out of an unknown total of *Blue Book* consultants: National Librarian Svend Dahl; Paul Kern-Jespersen, a civil engineer and deputy chairman of the Association of Danish Engineers 1945–1947; and Albert Nielsen Kamp, who was the general secretary of the association Danish Co-operation (Dansk Samvirke), and an editor of *Danmarksposten* (Dansk Samvirke’s publication for Danes abroad) and of a handbook called *Danes Abroad* (*Danske i*

75. Jespersen, “Kraks Blå Bog,” 49.

76. *The Blue Book* anniversary edition from 2009 mentions the number 100.

77. “Den blaa Bog,” *Information*, February 6, 1946.

Udlandet). Kamp was also a collaborator at the Danish biographical handbook (*Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*).

In cases of a court conviction, decisions were straightforward and must lead to exclusion. In other cases, the editors' assessment would have to size up the damage to the individual's reputation. In the end, the list of individuals who were excluded because of nationally defined offenses during the occupation would comprise more than thirty high-ranking business leaders, including the aforementioned manager of the large F.L. Smidth corporation, Gunnar Larsen (who was later acquitted by the Supreme Court), and manager of the Aarhus (vegetable) Oil Factory, Thorkild Juncker (chairman of the Eastern Committee and convicted for conspiracy against the state).⁷⁸

Some of the vanished business leaders had actually been convicted—or were expected to be. A few examples will suffice. At the top end of the scale, the well-known publisher Bjørn Erichsen was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment for treason.⁷⁹ Geo Schiørring, a barrister of the Supreme Court who had founded a factory in order to produce airplane parts for the *Luftwaffe*, got away with four months. The greater part of those business leaders who were removed from *The Blue Book* were not convicted in court, however. Examples are cooperative housing society director F. C. Boldsen, who had been accused of but not charged with collaboration, and merchant and manufacturer Karl Marinus Christensen, who had resigned from the Society of Merchants' Greater Council after the society's "court of honour" had criticized him for denouncing a competitor as a Jew.⁸⁰ Others, such as engineer Theodor Hansen, proved difficult to handle: Hansen, who had directed a partly Danish owned cement factory in Estonia in 1920–1940 and again in 1942–1943, had been cleared by the Association of Engineers and was also "acquitted" by the *Blue Book* consultants Kamp and Kern-Jespersen, retaining his place in the 1944–1946 edition. He then had to be removed in 1947, after receiving a prison sentence of eight months for having been a member of the Organisation Todt.⁸¹ Former members of the Eastern Committee of the Foreign Ministry—Thorkild Juncker, Knud S. Sthyr, Folmer Lüttichau, and J. C. Hempel—were automatically discontinued from the pages of *The Blue Book*, whereas Knud Højgaard, a well-known and highly respected former chairman of the Association of Engineers, who had also been a member of the Eastern Committee, kept his place, most likely because of his prewar merits and the fact that he had neither been prosecuted in the courts nor tried in the engineers' court of honour.⁸²

78. Lund, "Cement og politik"; Knudsen, "Den største Tyskerven og Nazist."

79. Liebst, *Forræderi på første klasse*.

80. Grosserer-Societetet 1308, Æresretten, Forhandlingsprotokol 1945–1946, Danish National Archives/Erhvervsarkivet 06604.

81. *The Blue Book*, editors' copy 1943, 450.

82. For Højgaard, see Lund, "Virksomhedsledelse og den autoritære stat." On the list of deleted were also nine farmers, including four large estate owners; fifteen civil servants and army officers, including the first commander of the Danish volunteers for the Waffen-SS J. P. Kryssing and head of Copenhagen Police Ivan Stamm; sixteen prominent journalists and writers; six painters, ballet dancers, and musicians; fifteen representatives from academia and the liberal professions (among them a well-known zoologist, head of the City of Copenhagen Archives Flemming Dahl, and the lawyer Carl Popp-Madsen); and three who did not fit any of those categories, among them Laurits Hansen, trade union leader and former cabinet minister. A complete list will appear on Wikipedia, "Kraks Blå Bog."

If we are to assess the criteria used in decisions on who to publish, a look at the *Blue Book* “freeze list” may prove useful: the remaining sixty-four individuals who had been scrutinized and found worthy of republication in 1946.

Certain prominent figures of the policy of cooperation in 1940–1945, heavily criticized by the resistance and the media, were not even on the list. They included former prime and foreign minister Erik Scavenius, former minister of justice Thune Jacobsen, and former president of the Supreme Court Troels G. Jørgensen, who all kept their place. The editors also made it clear to one another that, as a principle, accusations of Nazism made by “communists” would not suffice for expulsion.

Of those permitted to remain in *The Blue Book*, many had been cleared by the legal system after being arrested or exempted from duty. Others had been acquitted by courts of honour or the Civil Servants’ Court. Most of these persons offered no problem to the editors. For instance, business engineers Knud Højgaard, T. C. Thomsen, and T. K. Thomsen were acquitted by the Association of Engineers’ court of honour and then published by the *Blue Book* editors.

The editors were not consistent, however. Readers of the 1946 edition would have been surprised to recognize Peter Knutzen, the former general manager of the Danish Railways and chair of the Danish-German Association (Dansk-Tysk Forening), who had been suspended and then removed from his post by the Civil Servants’ Court in 1945. Others, such as a couple of permanent undersecretaries in the Foreign Ministry known for their Nazi sympathies, remained on the pages of *The Blue Book* despite having been removed from their posts in May 1945. For instance, the former Danish consul general to Hamburg was subjected to investigation by the Civil Servants’ Court and then resigned but kept his entry in *The Blue Book*. Others were removed despite the fact that they had been cleared by the legal system. This happened, to name a few examples, to the manager of the Dansk Cement Central Knud S. Sthyr, Povl Bihesen, who had managed the National Socialist Foundation, and F. C. Boldsen, manager of the cooperative housing society KAB.⁸³ Court trials were pending, yet those individuals were never convicted.

To the attentive reader, the fact that several of the purged were later reinstated into *The Blue Book* may well have appeared inconsistent, too, yet in the long run it is telling of the power of the *Blue Book* editors to name and rename—reconsecrate—members of the elite. Between 1947 and 1967, twenty deleted names reappeared, including some of the business leaders mentioned above: Folmer Lüttichau, F. C. Boldsen, Theodor Hansen, J. C. Hempel, and Geo Schiørring. In this way, 21 percent of those deleted were actually restored, or “reconsecrated,” after up to twenty-four years of quarantine—a number that may well have been significantly higher had several deconsecrated not died in the meantime.

“Courts of Honour”

The *Blue Book* purge was not the end of processes of deconsecration in civil society—far from it. Other, significant parts of the settlement with collaborators ended up outside the country’s

83. Jensen, *Dansk Financia A/S*.

courts of law. Since 1943, the resistance in coordination with professional politicians had done a wholehearted job of preparing for a legal reckoning in order to prevent self-policing and lynching; yet, in civil society a parallel process was beginning to take shape even before liberation, and the *Blue Book* purge was perhaps only the most prominent. In a number of organizations and associations, preparations were made for internal reckonings and the rooting out of “bad elements”: members who had proven unable to withstand the pressure or temptations to profit from the occupation, and must therefore be deemed unworthy of confidence. The wish to follow this path was stated in an exemplary manner by the secretary of the Society of Merchants (Grosserer-Societetet), Tove Moyell, as she wrote to the society’s chairman in June 1945, calling for the expulsion of two members of the society’s leading committee, who had allegedly been involved with the notorious Eastern Committee of the Foreign Ministry: “Even if there is no legal ground to press charges,” Moyell wrote, “these two gentlemen have acted in an incorrect manner, and the Society of Merchants will suffer a greater loss of prestige by assuaging this case than by asking these gentlemen to step down from the committee.”⁸⁴ In accordance with Moyell’s recommendation, between August 1945 and March 1946, the Society of Merchants undertook an examination that in six cases stated its criticism or disapproval of members who had socialized with German officials, expressed Nazi sympathies, or denounced Jewish business owners (while rejecting seven other accusations).⁸⁵ Similar proceedings took place in the Writers’ Association (Dansk Forfatterforening), the Actors’ Association (Dansk Skuespillerforbund), the Actors’ Union of 1879 (Skuespillerforeningen af 1879), the Dramatists’ Association (Dramatikerforbundet), the Association of Journalists (Journalistforbundet), and the Association for Large Landowners (Tolvmandsforeningerne), to name a few. Processes of exclusion took place in so-called courts of honour appointed by organizational leaders themselves and equipped with the authority to exclude members and, in general, unravel and expose the words and deeds of particular individuals during five years of occupation.

With a few exceptions, these proceedings have yet to be systematically explored.⁸⁶ Several leading business organizations carried out their own investigations, among them the Association of Building Contractors (Entreprenørforeningen) and the Association of Engineers (Ingeniørforeningen). The latter set up a commission in 1945 to look into cases of collaboration and by autumn 1947, forty-nine cases had been investigated, which had led to ten exclusions and sixteen statements of disapproval with forty cases still pending. The engineers’ attempts came to a standstill in 1950, when proceedings were cancelled after a verdict from the Danish Supreme Court had ruled the association’s processes unlawful. The case had been filed against the Association of Engineers by the well-known engineer and member of the Danish

84. Letter from Tove Moyell to Rudolph Schmidt, 22 June, 1945, Grosserer-Societetet 1309, *Æresretten - Æresretssager 1945–1946*, Danish National Archives/Erhvervsarkivet 06604. For the Eastern Committee, see Lund, *Hitlers spisekammer*; Lund, “Building Hitler’s Europe.”

85. Grosserer-Societetet 1308, *Æresretten*, Forhandlingsprotokol 1945–1946; Grosserer-Societetet 1309, *Æresretten - Æresretssager 1945–1946*, Danish National Archives/Erhvervsarkivet 06604.

86. It is known how the Council of Lawyers (Sagførerrådet) disqualified nine of its members; the Association of Doctors (Den almindelige Lægeforening) expelled fourteen members (including leader of the Danish Nazi Party Frits Clausen); the Dentists Association (Dansk Tandlægeforening) purged itself of three members; the Association of Architects (Akademisk Arkitektforening) got rid of three members; and the Association of Vets (Den danske Dyrlægeforening) expelled fifteen members, including the leader of the German minority in Southern Jutland, Jens Møller. Tamm, *Retsopgøret efter besættelsen*, 592–604.

parliament Rudolf Christiani, whose conduct during the German occupation had resulted in the association's disapproval.⁸⁷

The special courts were followed closely by the media, especially in the journals of the trade unions and in *Frit Danmark*, which had been one of the most prominent clandestine papers during the occupation.⁸⁸ The courts should be taken as expressions that the supplements to the criminal code in 1945 were not sufficient to secure a thorough purge of traitors and collaborators. There was widespread public skepticism with regard to the legal settlement and few expectations that the legal settlement would produce convincing results. If “purges from the top to the bottom” was the public claim in the summer of 1945, many people suspected that the compromise between the resistance and the politicians would water down the process, and that cleansing would perhaps be directed at the small fish while the big crooks would walk free. This opinion was clearly expressed in *Frit Danmark* in June 1945. Following the passing of the retroactive laws on treason, which would not clamp down on citizens solely because of political views held during the occupation, one would expect those people to “seek shelter in those corners that were not covered by official laws—thus the courts of honour, the extension and addendum for safeguarding the satisfaction of the sense of decency.... During [the occupation], it was necessary to think and act in concordance with the national interest, and those who failed because of weakness or stupidity are not excused—they must pay if not with loss of freedom then with loss of the goodwill of their fellow citizens.”⁸⁹

Although courts of honour were warned against making too harsh decisions—after all, according to High Court barrister Jonas Collin, these were expected to take care of “minor criminals” while the legal courts would deal with “major criminals”⁹⁰—events would seem to confirm public suspicions of a distorted legal reckoning. The trials and convictions of the ordinary criminal courts in 1945–1946 mostly targeted a range of army officers and rank and file who had volunteered for service in the Waffen-SS, other small-scale criminals with a history of rendering service to the occupying power in one way or another, and petty collaborators who had benefited from German connections, acted as informers, advocated for Nazism, or profited from trading with the enemy. If the “big fish” were often let go, or their trials were put on hold or drawn out, it was caused by juridical complications or by the fact that they had become politicized and would have far reaching consequences in case they ended in conviction. Such trials typically came to a conclusion several years after liberation, when public interest had decreased considerably and sentences had become milder.

The courts of honour enjoyed the judicial authority of associations and unions as a whole, based on their statutes and rights of self-governance. Their verdicts could be tried at ordinary courts, and their decisions were commonly recognized. They were walking a tightrope, however, for which kind of evidence would have to be produced, how tough the verdicts must be, and what could be considered “just”? How does one define “unnational behavior”?⁹¹ However organizations chose to manage the numerous proceedings, the courts of honour

87. Morsing, *De ansete mænds fagforening*, 70–80. On the Danish Writers' Association, see Hardis, *Æresretten*.

88. For a bibliographical overview, see Lauridsen, *Samarbejde og modstand*, 505–517.

89. “Æresdomstole,” *Frit Danmark* 5, June 8, 1945.

90. Jonas Collin, “Æresrettens Virksomhed,” *Frit Danmark* 7, June 22, 1945.

91. Solvang, “Æresretten av 1945,” 116.

enabled them to bring an appropriate number of propitiatory sacrifices so that they may themselves walk unblemished into the postwar future. The individuals who were targeted suffered a stained reputation as well as the humiliation of being excluded from the community to which they used to belong.

Similar processes took place in Norway, where, for example, the Association of Lawyers expelled more than one hundred members or 8 percent, and the Association of Teachers rid itself of at least one thousand former members of the nazified Union of Teachers, whereas the Industrial Association took a milder approach, sparing economic collaborators and expelling only members who had joined the Nazi Party.⁹² The cleansing of the Norwegian Writers' Association in 1945 was subject to fierce scholarly debate after the association's public announcement in November 2018 that rulings from 1945, in which seventeen writers had been stripped of their membership, must be declared null and void.⁹³ Such a revisionist debate has not taken place in Denmark, where the rulings of the courts of honour have been considered "calm," "moderate," and "discreet," although the decisions of the Danish Writers' Association has also been criticized for its Communist bias at the time.⁹⁴ In Denmark, public exposure and shaming took on a very concrete shape with the publication of lists of "traitors" and "collaborators" in the immediate postwar period, building on records captured or secured by resistance groups during the last phase of the occupation. The most well-known of these was the so-called *Bovrup Register*, an incomplete list of individual members of the Danish Nazi Party, including addresses and dates of birth and membership.⁹⁵ Other lists were circulated in smaller numbers; these included the so-called *Stockholm List*, a record of suspected collaborators compiled by resistance groups in Denmark and policemen in exile in Sweden, as well as *The Black Register*, a list of accounts in the Danish Central Bank that had been frozen because of suspicion of economic collaboration.⁹⁶

Into High Society and Back Out Again: Concluding Remarks

We have suggested that the self-purging of the political and economic elite after liberation in 1945 could be seen from a deconsecration perspective. The reconstruction of political and economic structures after war and occupation was supported by the elite's ability to mend its legitimate position in society after five years of extreme uncertainty and staggering between national sentiments and economic necessities. One could argue that, in the end, the successful reconstruction of the elite's legitimacy meant that no profound changes had to be made or forced through in the composition of the political and economic elite. The

92. Espeli, Næss, and Rinde, *Våpendrager og veiviser*, 233–241.

93. Rem, Søbye, and Fløgstad, *På æren løs*. The debate took place in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* as well as *Tidsskrift for forretningsjus*. For an overview, see Solvang, "Æresretten av 1945"; Sunde and Woxholth, "Realjus"; Fløgstad et al., "En selvsagt ting."

94. Hertel, "Det belejrede og det besatte åndsliv," 80; Hardis, *Æresretten*.

95. Stensager, "Bovrup-Kartoteket."

96. *Bovrup-Kartoteket*; *Stockholmlisten*; *Kartotek over de af Nationalbanken iværksatte spærringer af bankkonti m.m.* ("Det sorte Kartotek").

official, legal settlement worked in combination with the unofficial reckoning in civil society to restore legitimacy. The reconstruction of legitimacy among business leaders, for example, depended on their organizations' ability to settle accounts with Denmark's official policy of cooperation 1940–1945, which from a post-1945 viewpoint had proven morally wrong (although things may have looked entirely different in 1940). In business as well as in politics, this meant that you dissociated yourself from the policy of cooperation, professed the winning side, and brought the necessary sacrifices. Personal replacements in leadership is, after all, a classic tool when it comes to restoring legitimacy in organizations.⁹⁷

We must not forget that the national cleansing of the Danish *Who's Who* after World War II can be explained as a pragmatic strategy of adaption carried out by its editorial board in order to maintain or restore the legitimacy of the book itself. However, the deconsecration process also teaches us about the role of such informal bodies in restoring not only an editorial board, but the symbolic order of a nation proper. This analysis showed how the editors attempted to formalize their procedures, applying a cautious, conservative and legally based policy when deciding about exclusions.⁹⁸ The process of deconsecration may have been initiated for reasons of legitimacy, but the editors chose to strive for criteria of legality—a wise choice, presumably, as a procedure based purely on subjective decisions based on rumours and hearsay would itself seem to lack legitimacy and would be almost impossible to practice. The laws that were passed with retroactive effect in the summer of 1945 proved helpful in this process. Without them, *The Blue Book* would have had to come up with other, perhaps more vulnerable, criteria for who belonged to the elite and who did not. Thus, in *The Blue Book* of 1946, a flawed reputation alone would not have you expelled from the community of the elite; you would have to be actually convicted of a crime. This was the general idea, at least. This is consistent with Bourdieu's understanding of consecration as a process that adds legitimacy to existing power relations.

It is worth noting, however, that this policy was not consistent. In its one-hundred-year anniversary *Festschrift*, *The Blue Book* celebrates its integrity and consistency, not least with respect to the post-1945 purge. However, as we have seen, there are several cases in which an individual who had not been convicted of anything, not even been tried before a court, was deleted from *The Blue Book* anyway. One example is the trade union leader and former cabinet minister Laurits Hansen, who had been put before a court of honour in the Social Democratic Party and then removed from his positions after the disclosure that he had been secretly negotiating with German authorities about taking over as prime minister during the Danish-German political crisis in autumn 1942.⁹⁹ This points to the difficulty of applying legal criteria to a problem that is basically concerned with legitimacy. In the editors' handling of the delicate problem of excluding people who had *not* been convicted of a crime, it would seem as if the “expendables” were primarily to be found in business companies. Although originally, the editors' goal may have been to walk a straight, legal line, there were

97. Suchman, “Managing Legitimacy.”

98. This is a main point made in Jespersen, “Kraks Blå Bog.”

99. See Kirchhoff, *Augustoprøret*, vol. 1, 58; Kirchhoff, “Vor eksistenskamp er identisk med nationens kamp.”

clearly deviations from this policy, which would again hint at some (undefined) need to purge *The Blue Book* of individuals who had somehow placed themselves outside the national community, even if they had not been convicted of anything. In the case of *The Blue Book*, despite what has been said and told and celebrated, a number of exclusions were not based on convictions from a court of law, but on public criticism, denouncement, and shaming. A strict, legal approach could not be maintained.¹⁰⁰

This phenomenon can be explained by the concepts of consecration, deconsecration, and symbolic sanctions, in which a body of individuals, publicly recognized as being invested with unofficial powers to nominate, undertakes to align its official (although informal) register of the elite with the current public opinion. The publication thus confirmed and reinforced the postwar narrative of the occupation years that established and defined the distinction between the good and the bad. War and occupation had constituted an external shock to the elite; order was being restored.

Being admitted to the *Who's Who* or *The Blue Book* is to be admitted, in a symbolic way, to society's highest positions and inner circles. If your position at the highest level of the company or the state had not already infused you with reputation and recognition of influence and power, your entry into *Who's Who* would. Being admitted is considered an honor, but it is more than that: It *exhumes* honor; it is a public manifestation of the fact that you have been proven worthy to be counted among the best. It signifies reputation, distinction, ability, and respectability.

Being *removed* from the *Who's Who*, on the other hand, is very close to being stripped of your medal of honor. It was rewarded to you, yet, in the end, you did not prove worthy of it. Whereas in the British *Who's Who*, admittance is for life, the Danish *Blue Book* retains this possibility of humiliation and punishment and at times removes "members" whom it deems unworthy of public recognition. Providing rare examples of Agamben's *homo sacer*, the deconsecrated even include a few individuals who went into exile, such as Gunnar Larsen (mentioned above), who moved to Ireland in 1954, and Christian Kjær, Larsen's nephew and an heir of the F.L. Smidth corporation, who moved to Switzerland in 2019 after receiving a court conviction and being stripped of his courtier ranks.

When close to one hundred individuals who had crossed the line of collaboration during the German occupation were removed from *The Blue Book* after the liberation in 1945, the ostracism signaled much more than a simple practicality that mechanically reflected the course of events. It was itself an act of punishment. Staying with Bourdieu, this could serve as a preliminary answer to the questions of *how* and *why*. If *symbolic capital* marks the explicit, outward manifestation and exclusiveness of the crosscutting prestige and reputation of an array of social groups, the *symbolic sanction*, on the other hand, would signify the singling out of people who must be excluded from this group, for a limited period of time or for good, in order for the group to preserve its prestige and power—indeed, to protect the value of its symbolic capital.

100. The two contributors to the official *Blue Book* one-hundred-year anniversary edition agreed that there was much to celebrate with regard to the post-1945 purge. Although Hans Hertel was "impressed with how the editors carried out its own, discrete purge while keeping its cool," Knud J. V. Jespersen found that *The Blue Book* had preserved its reputation as "incorruptible and inaccessible for pressure."

Further research may help us explain why individuals who had been removed from the book were reinstated at later stages. Such processes of reconsecration—symbolic rites of passage, silent reemergences, etc.—should be of great interest to business historians interested in the symbolic aspects of the business elite.

Processes of deconsecration also merit closer attention as phenomena related to but distinct from processes of *déclassement* (i.e., downward social mobility). The *Blue Book* editors' attempt to restore symbolic order after World War II is but one example of such processes of symbolic exclusion from elite status. Business elites may be pushed into a fall from grace through digression of norms in relation to sexual scandals, legal misconduct, public misinformation (e.g., Big Tobacco, Big Oil), "CSR washing", environmental damage, or transgression of norms related to international relations (e.g., continuing operations in Russia during the Russo-Ukrainian War).

Deconsecration can also involve other types of sanctions. Business elites will often hold prestigious board positions, awards, grants, honorary positions at universities or cultural institutions, or representative roles. Depriving persons of such positions can have relatively minor immediate impact on their financial situation, but can be devastating to their status position.

Moreover, who holds the power to consecrate and deconsecrate is an empirical question relative to changes over time and according to cultural context. Today, being accepted into *The Blue Book* does not grant the same prestige as it did in the 1940s. Consequently, the loss of status that follows from expulsion is smaller. With the advent of the Internet and social media, traditional and more or less recognized elite registers, such as national *Who's Who* publications, are challenged by new ways of establishing criteria for symbolic entries and exits of society's leading circles. Today, one may ask if technological change is replacing previous nationwide types of consecration and deconsecration by global "courts of public opinion" in the guise of media personalities, social media influencers, "Twitter wars," and Facebook shitstorms.¹⁰¹ In democratic, open societies, it would seem, at least, as if public opinion has been gaining strength at the expense of self-appointed, exclusive bodies and committees with the power to symbolically appoint members of the elite.

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101. Atkinson, "Time for Bourdieu."

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