

Norwegian Homonationalism and Byzantine Queer History¹

ABSTRACT

This article aims to demonstrate how queer readings of premodern historiography can make meaningful contributions to contemporary political struggle and to make one such contribution. It uses fifteenth-century Byzantine depictions of Ottoman sultans as heretical, barbaric, and sexually non-normative to denaturalise the very different (and yet uncannily similar) combination of religious, ethnic, and sexual alterity in contemporary Norwegian homonationalist discourse. It seeks to unpack the anti-Muslim and anti-migrant implications of the neoliberal story of LGBT+ rights accumulation told in the framing of *Skeivt kulturår 2022*, the commemoration/celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the decriminalisation of sex between men in Norway. Specifically, it seeks to draw out the positioning of the Norwegian state in that framing, by leveraging the temporal and cultural alterity of Byzantine history writing. The objective is to disturb the complacent production of a story of Norwegian queer history as a dimension of benign Norwegian liberalism and exceptionalism. The specific role of the premodern past in Norwegian homonationalist narratives is illustrated through the example of an exhibition within the framework of *Skeivt kulturår 2022*, which was ultimately cancelled because of a curatorial text naming Norwegian state violence and use of the term homonationalism. In the process, this article seeks to identify a way for premodern queer history to do useful work in the present.

Keywords: Queer history, Byzantine history, Skeivt kulturår 2022, homonationalism, the state

THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY HISTORY OF DOUKAS, a prose text in medieval Greek, narrates the final years of the Byzantine empire and the early growth of the Ottoman empire that displaced it (c. 1341–1462 AD).² The unfinished narrative begins with an anxious description of Turks crossing the Hellespont from Asia Minor into Europe and ends shortly after the Ottoman conquest of the Byzantine capital, Constantinople (1453 AD), the symbolic end of the Byzantine imperial state.³ The *History* actually ends in the middle of a description of the Ottoman conquest of Mitylene (1462 AD), the main city of Lesbos, an island in the north-eastern Aegean held by Genoese lords in whose service the otherwise-unknown Doukas was employed as a secretary.⁴ The *History* interweaves the story of Genoa's colonial possessions in the eastern Mediterranean into its main narrative of Ottoman and Byzantine state expansion and collapse. This core narrative is organised around a string of protagonistic Byzantine and Ottoman rulers, whose characters stand in for the states they ruled and whose personalities, political, moral, and sexual are central to explaining action in the narrative. The *History* depicts several, although not all, Turkish/Ottoman rulers, as barbarous, animalistic, and sexually non-normative. This tripartite formula for undermining and vilifying specific Ottoman rulers is repeatedly deployed in the service of Doukas' explanation of the collapse of the Byzantine empire. Non-normative sexual object choice, tacitly combined with Islamic religion and other 'barbaric' characteristics, is thus woven into the story of two state projects.⁵

A passage depicting the Ottoman ruler Mustafa's preparations for an attack on the Genoese colony of Phokaia (a town in north-western Asia Minor) is illustrative of this tripartite formulation:

Although Phokaia was constantly on his [Mustafa's] lips as he reflected about its destruction, this in no way restrained him from indulging his wanton, licentious, and alcoholic appetites, or behaving ferociously like a prancing and snorting horse, or committing lewd acts with both males and females (ἐν τε θηλείαις καὶ ἄρρεσιν).⁶

Mustafa is produced as a wild animal, unable to contain his bodily functions, of which his sexual desires, both hetero- and homoerotic, are central. This depiction of the sexually non-normative Mustafa operates within the traditional parameters of the rhetorical ‘genre’ of historiographical invective (ψόγος in Greek), closely related to negative characterisation and explanation throughout the Greco-Roman and Christian historiographical tradition (Polemis 2021). A core element of such characterisation and invective is the performance of (in)appropriate gender (Neville 2019, 11–21). The effeminacy of Mustafa, demonstrated by his inability to perform appropriate sexual self-control (gendered as masculine) or to regulate his animalistic barbarism performs a number of explanatory functions in the narrative. Shortly after this passage, for example, Mustafa’s military ally Junaïd is convinced to abandon Mustafa and join his rival, Murad. One of the arguments used by Murad’s partisan, who is depicted as persuading Junaïd to switch sides in a long speech, is that Mustafa’s “military ineptness and his passion for women” are un-Ottoman.⁷ Elsewhere in that same speech, Mustafa is described as an effeminate (θηλυδρίας), a barbarian (βάρβαρος), and a commoner (ιδιώτης).⁸ The term θηλυδρίας is loaded with connotations of both non-normative gender performance and sexual preference. It is used both to describe eunuchs and men who are penetrated by other men in a range of texts (Messis 2006: vol. 2, 731). Military and diplomatic action in Doukas’ text is thus explained through Mustafa’s failure to perform normative gender and sexual roles, his barbarity, and his social class.

Mustafa’s depiction is part of a clearly identifiable pattern within Doukas’ narrative. A string of Ottoman rulers are characterised negatively both as individuals and rulers, through their tripartite presentation as barbarous, animalistic, and sexually non-normative. The first such example, which defines the formula adhered to throughout the text, comes early in the narrative during a description of diplomatic negotiations during a Byzantine civil war in the 1340s. The war plays out between the partisans of John VI Kantakouzenos and a regency government of the child emperor John V Palaiologos led by the Empress-dowager, the Patriarch, and Alexios Apokaukos. In his successful attempt to

enlist the help of the Ottomans in this conflict John VI Kantakouzenos offers his daughter in marriage to their ruler Orchan. At this point, the text includes an extended description of Orchan's response to this offer, which transitions into a more general 'ethnographic' description of the "barbarous people/nation" of the Turks:

When Orchan heard the ambassadors proposing this unexpected marriage contract and making promises of infinite treasures, he was like a bull which had been parched by the burning heat of summer, and was with mouth agape drinking at a hole filled with the coldest water but unable to get his fill; thus was he transformed as he listened because of barbarian incontinence (ὕπὸ τῆς βαρβαρικῆς ἀκολασίας). This nation is intemperate and lustful as no other people, incontinent beyond all races and insatiate in licentiousness. It is so inflamed by passion that it never ceases unscrupulously and dissolutely from having intercourse by both natural and unnatural means (καὶ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ παρὰ φύσιν) with females, males, and dumb animals (ἐν θηλείαις, ἐν ἄρρεσιν, ἐν ἀλόγοις ζῴοις). The people of this shameless and savage nation, moreover, do the following: If they seize a Greek woman or an Italian woman or a woman of another nation or a captive or a deserter, they embrace her as an Aphrodite or Semele, but a woman of their own nation or of their own tongue they loath as though she were a bear or a hyena. Orchan, therefore, when he heard of the proposed marriage with Kantakouzenos' daughter (for she was beautiful in form and her countenance was not without grace) and the size of the dowry and the pre-nuptial gifts sent by Kantakouzenos, quickly gave his consent.⁹

This passage, with both its specific example of Orchan and its more general ethnographic assertions, sets up the tripartite formula to which the briefer depiction of Mustafa (which comes later in the text) conforms. Orchan is presented as inhuman (like a bull), a characteristic explicitly linked to his barbarism, which arrives in the story in the depiction of his licentiousness and non-normative sexual desire. The text's description of Turkish sexual deviance ostensibly provides a causal explanation.

Unbridled and unnatural desire is why Orhan accepts the marriage alliance. His acceptance is central to the proceeding narrative of military-political action, explained primarily through Kantakouzenos, Orchan, and other male rulers/elites, and the increasing influence of the Ottomans in Byzantine politics.¹⁰

The same formula (of a barbarous, animalistic, and sexually non-normative Ottoman ruler) can also be seen towards the end of the *History*. In a famous passage, Mehmet II demands the fourteen-year-old son of Loukas Notaras, the Byzantine grand duke and chief minister, be brought to him after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, with the implication that he wanted to have sex with him.¹¹ In this detailed story, Mehmet II is first described as “a wolf in sheep’s clothing (ὁ προβατόσχημος λύκος)”, visiting the house of Notaras, where he meets Notaras’ sick wife and son.¹² After getting drunk that evening, Mehmet orders his chief eunuch to bring Notaras’ son to him.¹³ Notaras refuses and as a consequence both he and his children are killed.¹⁴ This section of the text concludes with the chief eunuch selecting the “beautiful maidens and handsome boys (τὰς ὡραίας κόρας καὶ εὐειδῆ ἄρρενα)” from amongst the children of the rest of the Byzantine elite on behalf of Mehmet II.¹⁵ This passage is more precise than the other examples and includes a specific youth as the object of desire. The role of the chief eunuch, as the vehicle for Mehmet’s desires, also adds to the general impression of gender deviance (Messis 2014).¹⁶ At the same time, it matches the formula of the passages describing Orchan and Mustafa. These Ottoman ‘animals’ (respectively a horse, a bull, and a wolf) are unable to control their barbaric lack of self-control, specifically their drunkenness and sexual urges.

These three characters, Orchan, Mustafa, and Mehmet, emerge from multiple intersecting discourses and hierarchical dichotomies. Roman-ness is opposed to barbarism; Christianity to Islam; orthodoxy to heresy; humans to animals; sobriety to drunkenness; and normative male to non-normative female/effeminate sexual object choice and gender performance. These commonplace elements of Byzantine historiographical discourse overlap and reaffirm each other and can be deployed to

produce various narrative effects. Messis (2020, 80–81), for example, has demonstrated how the charge of sodomy aimed at the Turks overlapped with and indeed directly influenced the presentation of Byzantines with ‘unorthodox’ theological beliefs, through the conflation of sodomy, Islam, and heresy.¹⁷ Importantly, the formula adhered to by these Ottoman rulers is repeatedly deployed in the service of Doukas’ explanation of the penetration of *Romania* (the Byzantine empire) by the Turkish people (personified by its various rulers) and the collapse of the Byzantine state (mirrored by the rise of the Ottoman state).¹⁸ In other words, non-normative sexual object choice is produced as a mechanism for explaining the success and failure of state projects. Orchan and Mehmet are especially important for the narrative structure of the *History* since they frame Doukas’ narrative, as the first and last Ottoman rulers mentioned in the text. Doukas’ state-centric narrative is thus propped up by the production of these characters as non-normative.

For my purposes in this article, these three passages from Doukas’ *History* will provide a fifteenth-century example of a narrative, which instrumentalises non-normative sexual desire (marked by ethnically and religiously inflected barbarism) in the telling of a story that is fundamentally about states. I use these examples to disrupt and denaturalise contemporary Norwegian homonationalism, another narrative that instrumentalises the queer in the telling of stories about a state. Byzantium offers a particularly useful mechanism for this project of denaturalisation and defamiliarisation, because it occupies a radically ambiguous position within Orientalist schemata. On the one hand, the *History*’s presentation of the Ottomans is self-consciously participating in the Greco-Roman literary and historiographical tradition that Edward Said identified as the inauguration of 2,000 years of Orientalist depictions of the eastern ‘Other’, in his analysis of Aeschylus’ *Persians* and Herodotus’ *Histories* (Said 1978, 21). Yet, in the modern imagination, Byzantium oscillates between inclusion and exclusion from ‘the West’, Europeanness, and racialised whiteness (generally, see Anderson & Ivanova 2023). Like queer bodies, Byzantium has been instrumentalised for contradictory ideological projects. As such, Byzantium is both

incorporated as the heroic bulwark of Christendom against Islam and rejected as one more despotic tyranny in the Orient awash with gold and full of conniving priests, eunuchs, and empresses.¹⁹ The ambiguity of Byzantium is shared by (and closely related to) that of the Balkans, which likewise occupies a position on the literal and metaphorical edge of Europe, neither fully West, nor fully East (Todorova 1997; on Byzantium specifically, see Mishkova 2022). However, the narratives that are told about such liminal cases have the potential to unveil and denaturalise the foundational logics that underpin more than just the ambiguous cases.

Homonationalism in 21st-century Norway

In this article, I demonstrate how Doukas' depiction of Ottoman non-normative sexual desire can disrupt and denaturalise another narrative that instrumentalises queerness. Specifically, I will consider the homonationalist narrative of the Norwegian state as manifested in a political speech at Oslo Pride 2019 announcing *Skeivt kulturår 2022* [*Queer Culture Year 2022*], an exhibition about premodern queer history within the framework of *Skeivt kulturår 2022*, and another political speech made in the wake of the shooting at London Pub during Oslo Pride 2022. My project here is not one of genealogy, but rather of confrontation. My aim is to undermine the putative naturalness of Norwegian homonationalist discourse by reference to echoes in Byzantine discourse; to make the former seem strange by demonstrating its commonalities with the chronologically and culturally alien (and yet uncannily similar) Byzantine material. I understand this purportedly apolitical homonationalist narrative as an instance of epistemic violence, that is "the construction of epistemic frameworks that legitimise and enshrine [...] practices of domination" (Galván-Álvarez 2010, 12). I draw on queer theory and queer history's potential to challenge naturalised normative frameworks (Love 2009), deconstruction's capacity to unmake systems of binary opposition (Derrida 2006/1993; Kleinberg 2017), and both Brechtian and formalist understandings of alienation and defamiliarization (on which see Robinson 2008).

My understanding of Norwegian public discourse today is informed by Jasabir Puar's concept of *homonationalism*, a term she coined to capture a shift in the material and discursive alignment of some palatable (and typically white, affluent, and heteronormative) homosexual bodies with Western nation-state projects in modernity (Puar 2013, 337).²⁰ Whatever the limits of the term, homonationalism offers a helpful way of characterising the lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses that produce progress narratives in which Western-European stories of the accumulation of state-granted rights are simultaneously lauded, naturalised, and produced as universal (Puar 2013, 337; Pérez 2016).²¹ Within these narratives "progress is sketched from a time of political tumultuousness up to one of stability and individualistic liberalism, in which the system is not questioned and individuals can finally retire to the domestic sphere" (Pérez 2016, 27; following Duggan 2002, 182). The past, in these narratives, becomes a space into which evil is displaced, in a way that at best obscures and at worst actively prevents political struggle in the present (Pérez 2016; building on Bevernage 2015). This model leads to specific places and people being situated (according to racist and colonialist logics) in the uncivilised, primitive, and evil past before gay rights (Rao 2020, 1–2, 16–21; Pérez 2016, 23; following Gopinath 2005). This phenomenon is exaggerated in a Norwegian context in which the narrative is not just of Western-European progress, but of Nordic and specifically Norwegian exceptionalism (Jacobsen 2018; Engebrestsen 2021, 3; Klatran 2021, 3).

The core features of Norwegian homonationalist discourse and its progress narrative of past, present, and future are captured in a speech delivered at a Pride reception in 2019 by the then minister of Culture and Equality, Trine Skei Grande, leader of Venstre, Norway's conservative-leaning liberal party, which was at the time a junior partner in the governing coalition.²² The speech, which followed one in a similar vein given by the then Prime Minister Erna Solberg, from Norway's conservative party, Høyre, was ostensibly about the announcement of *Skeivt kulturår 2022*, a national commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the repeal of §213 (the legal clause which criminalised

sex between consenting men in Norway until 1972) funded by the Norwegian state via the Arts Council Norway, Kulturrådet.²³ Grande began her speech at the self-congratulatory telos of a progress narrative organised around the explicitly liberal nation state and the trope of Norwegian exceptionalism:

Jeg er liberaler. For meg er retten til å elske den man vil, retten til å være som man er, den er helt grunnleggende. Norge er et av verdens beste land å bo i for skeive. [I am a liberal. For me the right to love whoever you want, the right to be who you are, is completely fundamental. Norway is one of the world's best countries to live in for queers.] (Grande 2019)

However, she limited this claim by acknowledging that there are still some problems in Norway, a point she illustrated by describing how a rainbow flag had been vandalised in Oslo's Grønland neighbourhood earlier in the week:

Men vi hører fortsatt om grusomme, uakseptable hendelser. Blant annet vandaliseringen av regnbueflagget på Grønland tidligere denne uken. Disse holdningene eksisterer. [But we still hear about horrible, unacceptable incidents. Among other things, the vandalisation of the rainbow flag in Grønland earlier this week. These attitudes exist.] (Grande 2019)

This reference to Grønland is highly racialised and participates in a much wider discourse that associates this Oslo neighbourhood's population with lawlessness and specifically homophobia (Klatran 2021), an association that depends on the construction of Grønland as a non-white, religious (specifically Muslim), and migrant community.²⁴ In the process Grande set up a distinction between good 'ethnically Norwegian' citizens, who live in the present, and bad migrants, produced as a dangerous remnant of the past.

Grande then described how the Norwegian state had played a prominent role in the successful establishment of European legislation on queer rights that year as part of the *International Day Against Homo-*

phobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) in May 2019, a success that she contrasted to the next step, namely ‘the global’:

Som statsministeren nevnte så var vi vertskap for IDAHOT i mai. Der jobbet vi for en felleseuropeisk innsats for skeives rettigheter. Flere land signerte IDAHOT erklæringen og forpliktet seg til å iverksette nødvendige tiltak for å sikre og fremme likestilling for LHBTIQ-personer. Og jobben med å følge opp begynner nå. Neste skritt blir å jobbe for en internasjonal global innsats for skeives rettigheter. [As the prime minister said, we were the host for IDAHOT in May. There, we worked for a pan-European effort for the rights of queer people. Several countries signed the IDAHOT declaration and committed to implement the necessary measures to ensure and implement equality for LGBTIQ people. And the work to follow up begins now. The next step will be to work for an international global effort for the rights of queers.] (Grande 2019)

This production of European success and its relegation of struggle to the past sets up ‘the global’ as the only locus for contemporary struggle. In other words, queer oppression and struggle is both spatially and temporarily distanced from the Norwegian state and placed out there beyond Europe’s securitised borders. At the borders of the EU, for example in Kosovo, this narrative of European enlightenment co-opts queer communities into homonationalist and Islamophobic narratives of Europeanization, in which they are produced as victims under constant threat from Islamic fundamentalists in need of protection by an expanded EU (Rexhepi 2016).²⁵

The rest of Grande’s short (509-word) speech (2019) is dominated by the trope of love, which appears seven times in the speech’s second half. The interjection *skål* in the speech’s final sentence, “Skål for stolthet, frihet og kjærlighet! [Cheers for pride, freedom, and love!]” (Grande 2019), celebrates a job well done. It is a pat on the back for the (neo) liberal nation state and the rights it has allowed some people to accumulate. Grande’s rhetoric offers a perfect example of what Lisa Duggan has called the new homonormativity, “a politics that does not contest

dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (2002, 179).²⁶

It is easy to forget (since she afforded the topic such limited space) that Grande's speech in 2019 was ostensibly part of the announcement that the 50th anniversary of the abolition of Norwegian state's criminalisation of men who had sex with men would be commemorated by a *Queer Culture Year* in 2022 (Grande 2019). The absence of both a historical perspective and Norwegian state criminalisation in her speech is therefore particularly conspicuous. Grande does not reach back further than a month in her narrative and does so only to identify Grønland as a site of incomplete liberality and therefore incomplete Norwegian-ness. Nevertheless, an unspecified and hazy past provides the implicit foundations for her triumphalist narrative of love and progress. For Grande, queer history has ended, à la Fukuyama (1992), in a blaze of liberalism, at least in Norway. The progressive march of queer rights radiates outwards from a centre, where we find the Norwegian nation-state, to the extra-European 'global' periphery. As it goes, this progress first encounters those migrants whom the Norwegian state has graciously allowed to cross its borders before arriving in Europe, where Norway leads the legislative agenda of the continent. It is not, then, just that the Norwegian state's role in legislating against and policing queer bodies in the past is lacking, but that the state is transformed into the protagonist of a story of European and global queer liberation, displacing both past state violence and the queer activists who resisted it. In the end, the past legislation and policing of the Norwegian state is entirely absent from this speech ostensibly about its commemoration.²⁷ This omission is central to the homonationalist reconfiguration of the history of the Norwegian state's relationship with (palatable) queer bodies, which now need to be defended (not from state violence), but from the violent threat of alien others from beyond Europe, both those already within the state (i.e., racialised and implicitly Muslim migrants in Norway) and 'the global'.²⁸

The relationship between the state and non-normative sexual object

choice in Doukas' *History* is reversed in Grande's speech. The penetration and (in the modern narrative) the infiltration of the state by non-conforming aliens is the locus for anxiety in both narratives, but the relationship between barbarism, Islam, and alterity and sexual object choice and gender performance has been reversed. In Grande's narrative, the state claims to protect queer and gender non-conforming people from precisely the 'dangers' with which non-normative sexual and gendered activities were intertwined in Doukas' *History*. However, by confronting Grande's speech with passages from Doukas' *History*, both the homonationalist logic and the oppositional binaries that Grande's speech assumes or silently produce as the natural order of things are rendered transparent. The sleight of hand that produces hyper-sexualised Ottoman rulers who want to have sex with men and even animals is fundamentally the same operation that produces the threat of homophobic Muslim immigrants in Grønland. The Byzantine narrative is less familiar to most modern readers. However, it is precisely that lack of familiarity, that strangeness, which renders Grande's homonationalist narrative itself strange. The fifteenth-century Byzantine attempt to make sense of the collapse of an empire through the characterisation of the sexual appetites of its conquerors thus finds good company with a speech that seeks to produce the state as *the* vector for queer liberation, whilst glossing over the history of state legislation that it ostensibly commemorates.

The problem with Grande's narrative is not just in what she says, but also in what she omits. Gaping silences riddle her speech and are papered over by a rhetoric of love. There is no mention, for example, of the other side of European cooperation, namely the border securitisation and specifically its adverse effect on people seeking asylum in Norway on the basis of sexual-orientation-based persecution (Akin 2015, 2017a, 2017b; Akin & Svendsen 2017; Mühleisen et al. 2012). There is no recognition of the colonial history of the Norwegian state and its agents in Sápmi, the continuing effects of that legacy of the imposition of colonial Christian gender norms, or the inequalities of access to healthcare that still affect queer Sami people today (Løvold 2014).²⁹ These repressed silences haunt Grande's narrative. The spectre of state violence is excised

from the homonationalist Norwegian progress narrative. It has been exorcised not only from the present, but also from the past, since even in a speech about the commemoration of that state's repeal of legislation, the state's implication in violence cannot be spoken. As Pérez has observed, "public discourse that places evil in the past seldom includes in its agenda the prevention of future violence" (2016, 26–27).

Exhibiting queer history

The modern part of the Norwegian gay progress narrative is the story of increasing legal recognition by the nation-state (Halsos 2007). It starts with the abolition of capital punishment (1842; 1905) and then the decriminalisation of sex between men and the equalisation of the age of consent with heterosexual sex (1972). It continues with the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation (1981), and the extension of legal partnership (1993) and marriage (2009) to same-sex couples. The commemoration of the 1972-abolition of §213 explicitly situates *Skeivt kulturår 2022* in this accumulative rights narrative. Although earlier queer histories have been and continue to be investigated (e.g., Evans 2019, 91–99; Bandlien 2011; Jakobsson 2011), albeit to a lesser extent than their modern counterparts, the nineteenth century typically represents the limit of Norwegian queer history in public discourse, besides a few headlines about "gay vikings".³⁰ The premodern past is typically forced to occupy an ambiguous position, both as the site of abjection and evil to which the other has been consigned (Dinshaw 1999) and as a resource exemplifying the timelessness (and indeed Christian-ness) of queer desire and relationships (Boswell 1980), which construct it as a foil to modernity (Foucault 1994; Halperin 2002).³¹ Since the discursive production of the premodern ends up being about modernity, the analysis of what one can and cannot say about the premodern past is extremely important. Homonationalist discourse is produced, maintained and policed in the present through the discursive control of the past.

Having considered Grande's normative speech 'announcing' *Skeivt kulturår 2022*, I turn to my own experience of working on a small exhibition, entitled *Queer Fragments from the Greco-Roman Tradition*, organised

within its framework. This impromptu exhibition was intended to coincide with Oslo Pride in June 2022. It was not funded by *Skeivt kulturår 2022*, but it was conceptualised as part of the ‘open’ commemoration and planned to use its open-source logo. The intentionally vague title was aimed to encompass the diverse interests of the four voluntary contributors, which structured the planned exhibition into sections respectively concerning queer/trans receptions of the Roman emperor Elagabalus, homoerotic spells and sexual curses, (my own contribution on) Byzantine legal and penitential stipulations relating to anal sex, and the use of ancient imagery in modern Norwegian lesbian movements. Ultimately this exhibition never took place, because of objections, first by a non-academic member of the institution’s events team and later by the most senior academic volunteer, to two elements of a general curatorial text, which sought to situate the exhibition in the context of Norwegian state violence, homonationalism, and contemporary political struggle:

It is easy to insert the ancients into a teleological story of progress, especially when framed by the *Skeivt kulturår* celebrations, which commemorate the repeal of §213, the legislation which forbade sex between consenting men in Norway until 1972. [...] The story of the Norwegian state’s policing of queer bodies did not stop in 1972, as queer Sámi are well aware, and is not over today, as queer asylum seekers discover at the border every day. (Kinloch 2022, draft exhibition general text)

In discussions concerning multiple digital drafts (in which these two sentences were first silently deleted and then explicitly critiqued), the non-academic events organiser expressed concerns that the institution appear to have a ‘political agenda’ and the most senior academic contributor refused to participate alongside any mention of the term homonationalism or any critique of the Norwegian state. Both considered these sentences (and any drafts which maintained a similar critique) to be inappropriately political and irrelevant to a premodern exhibition. Instead of a focus on repression, they suggested more emphasis on love and desire.

These responses offer a perfect example of how the homonationalist logics outlined above and illustrated by Grande's speech travel to and are reproduced and enforced in the production of the premodern past for public consumption. Premodern queer history (and even its modern appropriation by Norwegian lesbian activists), as implied by these critiques, is conceptualised as (not only potentially, but properly) apolitical. In an exhibition organised within the framework of a commemoration of the cessation of the Norwegian state's legal repression of men having sex with each other, critique of that state is produced as so unacceptable that previously willing contributors would rather that the exhibition not take place than continue under the aegis of any critique of homonationalism.

The resistance to political struggle – implicitly produced as irrelevant to the 'real content' of the exhibition – was paralleled by a will to include references to love and desire. The senior academic contributor was particularly keen to include an allusion to "the love that dare not speak its name", that is to Alfred Douglas's poem *Two Loves* (1894), as a diachronic constant that held the disparate elements of the exhibition together. The phrase alluded to, however, was made famous by the speech of Douglas' lover, Oscar Wilde, speaking at the 1895 libel trial, which led to Wilde's imprisonment for two years on charges of indecency (Foldy 1997). Ironically, appeal to this cliché of gay love, if properly contextualised would highlight precisely the repression it sought to decentre in the exhibition, namely a nineteenth-century English legal case. It is even more ironic, however, that Wilde's words should be paired with a refusal to critique the state or mention the Norwegian state's treatment of queer migrants given what has been described as Wilde's "open support for revolutionaries, along with his expressions of solidarity with Irish republicans, anarchists, workers and migrants" (Ó Donghaile 2020, frontmatter). The general depoliticisation of Wilde in contemporary culture thus captures the domestication of the materials of the planned exhibition.³²

The criticisms directed towards the contentious sentences were underpinned by the twin assumptions that history can speak for itself and that it should not be entangled with the present. Both assump-

tions are antonymic to queer history, which is defined by its resistance to such empiricist certainties and its active political commitment, even as it muddies linear relationships between past and present. Today, even those philosophers of history who still wish to salvage objectivity as the ultimate aim of history (e.g., Følrand 2017, 1–3), have been forced to admit that the past can neither speak for itself nor escape the ideology and presentism of its telling. Any such claims of transcending positionality merely constitute the articulation of a silent ideology, “liberal and conservative, whether its practitioners are aware of this or not” (White 1978, 69; see also Jenkins 1995, 9, 164–5; White 1973, 21–8). More specifically, as Lisa Duggan noted in her early description of queer theory and its relationship to gay and lesbian history, queer theory’s critique of stable identity categories was from the outset twinned with an assault on “empiricist methods which claim directly to represent the transparent ‘reality’ of ‘experience,’ and claim to relate, simply and objectively, what happened, when and why” (1991, 181).³³ Queer history treats the fact that the past cannot articulate itself and that any articulation of the past takes place in the present, not as an epistemological failure as in much philosophy of history (Brown 2001), but as a starting point for the exploration of alternative relationships between past and present. Such approaches vary dramatically (Freeman 2007, 159–176), from Caroline Dinshaw’s desire to build affective relationships (1999) to Lee Edelman’s refusal of history and reproductive futurism (2004) and materialist articulations of queerness as a critical relation to normativity and power (e.g., Chitty 2020, 26; Liu 2015, 40). For all of these, sometimes mutually incompatible, articulations of queer history, however, the suggestion that queer history can or should be disentangled from politics, presentism, or activism makes no sense.

This exhibition did not fail to take place because of a conspiracy to subvert the ‘true’ articulation of queer history. Those involved were either volunteers or institutional employees who were initially collegial and happy to work on the project. The fundamental problem was one of incomprehension. Why can’t we just have an exhibition about premodernity? Why does it have to be political (and difficult)?³⁴ What

have queer Sami or migrants to Norway got to do with Greco-Roman history? Why do we have to talk about repression instead of love?³⁵ A combination of lack of time and communication problems compounded this incomprehension. The working group never sat down to discuss these fundamental questions seriously, but only exchanged rushed digital redrafts remotely. Although the specifics of how institutional power was deployed to buttress the normative expectations of some of those involved should not be disregarded, of most relevance here are precisely those normative expectations themselves.

Skeiv history in the straight imagination

Those normative expectations can be seen even more clearly by what happened after the original exhibition was cancelled. When left with four empty cabinets and Oslo Pride rapidly approaching, the institution's events team decided to create their own exhibition without any researchers. The result was an exhibition without a title or any general text in perfect concordance with the liberal homonationalist vision of *Skeivt kulturår 2022* presented in Grande's speech. It consisted of a tokenistic assortment of offensively random texts and objects united only by the fact that the hurried events team had them available and thought they seemed 'gay'.

The result was one cabinet filled with a random selection of screen-shots of queer representation in NRK (the *Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation*), Netflix, and HBO programming and an issue of *Time* magazine with Ellen DeGeneres on its cover. A second cabinet set images of protests by Norwegian lesbian activists next to the covers of random issues of *The New Yorker* featuring images of gay marriage in the USA, with no explanation of the link between these objects. Another cabinet paired a random assortment of newspaper clippings about the Stonewall riots, queer magazines, and 'inspirational' quotations with a pink lacy tutu (with no explanation) upon which a mini rainbow flag on a stick had been perched. Ironically, one cabinet was ostensibly dedicated to the political struggle for decriminalisation in Norway, the very topic that had been deemed so inappropriately political that it led to the cancella-

tion of the planned exhibition. In this fourth cabinet the text of the legislation (§213) appeared next to the biography of Kim Friele, the activist most closely associated with its repeal, who was symbolically non-radical given her marriage to a contemporary conservative politician.

This exhibition offers a crude embodiment of homonationalist logic let loose on queer history. In each of the four cabinets queer struggle (in the form of discursive erasure, state legislation, lesbian/feminist movements, and queer riot/protest) was paired with its liberal telos or 'solution' (Ellen DeGeneres' face, Kim Friele/legal rights, gay marriage, and a rainbow flag on a pink tutu). The whole exhibition was offered to visitors under rainbow flags, rainbow bunting, and a rainbow 'selfie frame' branded with the name of the institution, that could have been offered as a pastiche of pinkwashing in a queer art gallery.³⁶ Once untethered from the planned exhibition's engagement with premodern history and unhindered by queer (or indeed any) scholarship, the institution's events team were left to conjure up 'something suitable for Pride' from their own imaginations. The lazy stereotypes they fell back on, and the random objects from some back-office cupboard that they threw into cabinets as examples of queer culture/history (which should ironically have stayed in the closet), are a product of the logic of a linear progress narrative of gay liberation inflected by Norwegian homonationalism.

Violent implications

The insistence that in Norway queer people are fully emancipated and the consequent refusal to engage publicly with critique of Norwegian homophobia, transphobia, and homonationalism in the present allows the continuation of violence against those queer people who do not conform to narrow nationalist stereotypes of Norwegian-ness.

It is precisely by denying culpability or assuming that one is not implicated in violent relations towards others, that one is outside of them, that violence can be perpetuated. Violence, especially of the liberal varieties, is often most easily perpetrated in the spaces and places where its possibility is unequivocally denounced. (Puar 2007, 24)

Puar's observation captures precisely the violent relations perpetuated by the Norwegian state, exemplified by its unequal provision of healthcare to certain types of queer people (Løvold 2014) and its humiliation and rejection of queer asylum seekers at the border (Akin 2015, 2017a, 2017b; Akin & Svendsen 2017; Mühleisen et al. 2012). These homonationalist narratives not only allow the perpetuation of such "liberal varieties" of violence, but also prepare the ground for hate speech and physical violence. Grande's progress narrative situating Grønland and 'the global' in the barbaric past, further back on the linear narrative of progress than the Norwegian nation-state, overlaps with and reinforces the extreme-right, Islamophobic, and anti-migrant rhetoric of groups such as *Stopp Islamisering av Norge* [*Stop the Islamisation of Norway*], known by the acronym SIAN. While burning copies of the Koran, this Islamophobic hate group claims to be defending the rights of women and gays from a perceived barbaric Islamic threat (Bangstad & Linge 2023). According to their logic, queer and feminist anti-fascist activists are "masochistic and suicidal" in their solidarity with Muslim communities in Norway.³⁷ SIAN thus demonstrates how liberal homonationalist progress narratives have been weaponised against migrant and Muslim communities.

The fact that the far right FrP – Fremskrittspartiet, the so-called Progress Party, adopted a calculatedly ambiguous relationship with SIAN (Bangstad 2016, 169), suggests that the gap between such views and mainstream Norwegian politics is relatively small. This is especially evident when one considers the fact that Grande's speech was delivered on behalf of a coalition government that not only included FrP, but had previously elevated one of its representatives, Solveig Horne, to the position of minister of equality, despite her attested homophobic public statements.³⁸ During her tenure, Horne's presence at Oslo Pride in 2016 was greeted by a piece of cake thrown by a queer anarchist protester. The heavy-handed police and judicial response to this protest, which saw the imprisonment and deportation of the non-Norwegian activist, has been demonstrated by Elisabeth L. Engebretsen (2021, 234) to illustrate the same homonationalist logic which divisively identifies certain "undeserving queers" as unworthy of the state's protection.

On Friday 25th June 2022, the evening after the offensive replacement exhibition was eventually dismantled (without apology and only under threat of national media attention), two people were killed and thirty-four injured in a homophobic shooting in London Pub, the heart of Oslo's queer scene. This attack, committed by Zaniar Matapour, a Norwegian citizen and resident since the age of twelve with extremist Islamist connections and Iranian heritage, has only intensified the Norwegian homonationalist narrative that displaces violence from 'real' Norwegian-ness (racialised as white) onto the Islamic, migrant, non-white, and non-Norwegian 'other'.³⁹ The logic of this displacement can be seen in the manner in which the attack immediately began to be commemorated and fixed in the national imaginary. In a speech on the 22nd July 2022, commemorating the anniversary of the 2011 bombing and shooting by right-wing extremist Anders Breivik, the current prime minister of Norway, Jonas Gahr Støre (Arbeiderpartiet), also reflected on the London Pub shooting:

Natt til 25. juni – dagen da vi skulle markere Pride i Oslo, skjøt en mann mot uskyldige mennesker i den varme sommernatten. De ble ofre, mange av dem – høyst trolig – fordi de feiret retten til å elske den man vil. Og gjerningsmannen – høyst trolig – var motivert av islamistisk ekstremisme. Derfor henvender jeg meg i dag til de moderate muslimene, det store flertallet i muslimske miljøer – og ber dem snakke ut mot både holdningene og handlingen, igjen; snakke tydelig til de deler av befolkningen som lytter spesielt til dere [...] Vi vet at skeive opplever hat, trusler og vold. Hetsen er spesielt stor mot transpersoner. Sånn skal vi ikke ha det i Norge. [On the night of the 25th June – the day we were supposed to mark Pride in Oslo, a man shot at innocent people in the hot summer night. They became victims, many of them – most likely – because they were celebrating the right to love whoever you want. And the perpetrator – most likely – was motivated by Islamist extremism. That is why I turn today to the moderate Muslims, the great majority in Muslim circles – and ask them to speak out against both the attitudes and the action, again; speak clearly to the parts of the population that

listen to you in particular [...] We know that queer people experience hate, threats and violence. The incitement is especially great against trans people. We should not have it like that in Norway.] (Støre 2022)

Støre's speech, which framed "the right to love" in opposition to Islamist extremism and explicitly called on "moderate Muslims" to police their own communities, performs a sleight of hand. It reduces queer struggle to depoliticised love in the same breath as displacing responsibility both for the shooting and the violent experiences of queer and, in particular, trans people in Norway onto the internal Muslim 'other'.⁴⁰ All this is underpinned by the assumption of Norwegian exceptionalism and the displacement of such homophobia and anti-trans violence onto the extra-Norwegian 'global'. This sort of thing might happen elsewhere, but "[w]e should not have it like that in Norway". Støre's speech thus shares the logic of Grande's announcement, even as the tone shifts from triumphalism to remembrance.

In the aftermath of the attack, the police recommended the cancellation of solidarity commemorations, in what the subsequent report has found to be a contravention of both the Norwegian Constitution (§101 on the freedom of assembly) and the European Convention of Human Rights (Article 11) (Jansen et al. 2023, 247–262). Regardless, people took to the streets, organised by activists from Salam, Skeiv Verden, Reclaim Pride, PKI, and Steatornis (organisations made of and representing queer Muslim, migrant, autonomous left, trans, and disabled people). During these marches and commemorations, activists shouted "Kampen forsetter! [The fight continues!]". Yet at the same time, this visceral call for queer liberation on the streets was already being reframed by politicians into the depoliticised language of love, as in the press release of the then foreign minister, Anniken Huitfeldt (Arbeiderpartiet): "La oss fortsette å hylle kjærligheten [Let us continue to celebrate love]" (2022).⁴¹

The role of the Norwegian state in the stories being told about the decriminalisation of sex between men in Norway, whether in the speech of Grande or in relation to the cancelled and replacement exhibitions,

exemplify the discourse into which the London Pub attack was immediately assimilated. The benign role of the state, despite the shortcoming of security services, is assumed. Even in a speech focused on the commemoration of a far-right extremist attack, the Muslim population of Norway is singled out for responsibility for anti-trans and -queer violence. Gay love is foregrounded and opposed to Islamist extremism. This easy assimilation is possible because of the homonationalist epistemic framework that has been naturalised in Norwegian public discourse.

Denaturalizing queer history

According to the logic of late Byzantine historiography, queerness is yoked together with animalism, barbarism, and heresy to explain the rise and fall of fifteenth-century states. Norwegian homonationalism shares Byzantine historiography's racist and Islamophobic logics, but queerness has been redeployed in the service of a different (national) state project. Instead of an insult that reveals the moral failings of 'the enemy', queerness becomes a value to be protected, antonymic to rather than synonymous with Islam. By placing these two traditions in conversation, the putative naturalness of Norwegian homonationalist discourse is made strange through its unignorable commonalities with the chronologically and culturally alien (and yet uncannily similar) Byzantine discourse. The ambiguity of Byzantium, which has been interchangeably included and excluded from 'the West', Europeanness, and racialised whiteness at different times, in particular, highlights the constructed quality of stories that have been repeated so often in Norway that they seem natural.

On the one hand, this comparison draws out the implicit logics of Norwegian homonationalism and the ways in which it produces the past in order to situate contemporary Norway at a specific point in a depoliticised homonationalist narrative of state-gifted progress towards heteronormativity. On the other hand, it demonstrates to historians of Byzantium and other premodern states and societies the impossibility of approaching their 'sources' naively as objects of antiquarian interest or even as examples of Byzantine discourses of otherness, without recourse to contemporary homonationalist discourses and epistemic frameworks.

Critical readings in queer history have the potential to render the opaque pivot of European nation-states from persecutor to protector transparent. Simultaneously, they serve to destabilise the stories being told today by far-right Islamophobic nationalists who seek to produce a primordial Islamic menace, with 'medieval' attitudes towards gender and sexuality. The vivid similarities between Byzantine and contemporary Norwegian constructions of a link between a barbaric Islamic threat and sexual non-normativity reveals the exact opposite, whilst highlighting the continuity of powerful states and their spokespeople weaponizing non-normative gender and sexuality.

Queer people, researchers, and activists in Norway will not be paralysed into inaction until the Byzantinists show up to discuss fifteenth-century presentations of Ottoman rulers. Activist groups, such as Skeiv Verden and Salam Norge, are more than capable of speaking for themselves and demanding to be taken seriously in the present. They are already identifying and critiquing anti-migrant, racist, and Islamophobic discourse and stories that require gender and sexually non-normative people to be defended by the state from an external threat. Nevertheless, queer histories that are explicit in creating a relationship between processes and discourses of abjection, violence, and exclusion in the past create a unique opportunity to denaturalise the stories that create space for and justify violence in the present. The manner in which the political speeches and exhibitions discussed in this article not only fail to do this critical work, but actively undermine it, is therefore extremely important. Grande's speech, the sad fate of the *Queer Fragments from the Greco-Roman Tradition* exhibition, the display that was created to replace it, and the manner in which the London Pub shooting have been treated are all symptoms of the same singular homonationalist logic. It is tempting to lampoon the exceptionalist claim that gay rights are a particularly 'Norwegian value' or the ignorant transformation of queer history from a site of contemporary struggle to a fancy-dress theme for institutional marketing. However, these examples must be challenged seriously as part of a consistent (if not coherent) discourse that sanctions and sustains violence in the present on the basis of a simplistic narrative about the past.

MATTHEW KINLOCH is a researcher in intellectual history at the University of Oslo. He holds a doctorate in History from the University of Oxford and a masters in Byzantine Studies from the University of Birmingham. His research interests include historiography, philosophy of history, narratology, gender/queer history, and comparative history/literature. He has previously analysed the syntactical and semantic subordination of female characters in Byzantine history writing (“In the Name of the Father, the Husband, or Some Other Man: The Subordination of Female Characters in Byzantine Historiography”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 74 (2020), 303–328). He is currently working on the production of non-elite and non-male characters as agents in fifteenth-century Byzantine history writing, within the scope of the Research Council of Norway project “Narrative Hierarchies: Minor Characters in Byzantine and Medieval History Writing.”

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Sara. 2021. *Complaint!* Duke University Press.
- Akhtar, Omar Orhan, Ingen er fri for alle er fri!, *Verdens Gang*, June 30, 2022, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/i/8Q28zG/ingen-er-fri-foer-alle-er-fri>.
- Akin, Deniz. 2015. Assessing Sexual Orientation-Based Persecution: A Closer Look at the Norwegian Practice of Asylum Evaluation of Gay and Lesbian Claimants. *lambda nordica* 20(1): 19–42.
- . 2017a. Queer Asylum Seekers: Translating Sexuality in Norway. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(3): 458–474.
- . 2017b. *Queer Challenges to the Norwegian Policies and Practices of Immigration: Asylum Seeking in Norway on the Grounds of Sexual Orientation-Based Prosecution*. PhD diss., Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- . 2018. Discursive Construction of Genuine LGBT Refugees. *lambda nordica* 23(3–4): 21–46.
- Akin, Deniz & Stine Helena Bang Svendsen. 2017. Becoming Family: Orientalism, Homonormativity, and Queer Asylum in Norway. In: *National Politics and Sexuality in Transregional Perspective: The Homophobic Argument*, edited by Achim Rohde, Christina von Braun & Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (39–54). Routledge.
- Andrews, Walter & Mehmet Kalpaklı. 2005. *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the*

- Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*. Duke University Press.
- Anon, Skeivt kulturår, *nasjonalmuseet.no*, 2021, <https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/aktuelt/2021/skeivt-kulturar-feiring-for-hele-landet/>.
- . Regjeringen holdt PRIDE-mottakelse, *regjeringen.no*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumentarkiv/regjeringen-solberg/aktuelt-regjeringen-solberg/kud/nyheter/2019/regjeringen-holdt-pride-mottakelse/id2660899/>.
- . Ny utstilling på Kode: Det skeive blikket, *mynewsdesk.com*, March 17, 2022, <https://www.mynewsdesk.com/no/kode-kunstmuseer-og-komponisthjem/pressreleases/ny-utstilling-paa-kode-det-skeive-blikket-3168757>.
- Aschenbrenner, Nathanael & Jake Ransohoff. 2021. *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
- Bandlien, Bjørn. 2011. Sexuality in Early Church Laws in Norway and Iceland. In: *Law and Private Life in the Middle Ages*, edited by Per Andersen, Mia Münster-Swendsen & Helle Vogt (191–204). DJØF Forlag.
- Bangstad, Sindre. 2016. Islamophobia: What's in a Name? Analysing the Discourses of Stopp Islamiseringen av Norge (Stop The Islamisation of Norway, SIAN). *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 5(2): 145–169.
- Bangstad, Sindre & Marius Linge. 2023. Qur'an Burning in Norway: Stop the Islamisation of Norway (SIAN) and Far-Right Capture of Free Speech in a Scandinavian Context. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Pre-publication version. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2023.2268168.
- Berkhofer, Jr., Robert. 1995. *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*. Harvard University Press.
- Bevernage, Berber. 2015. The Past Is Evil/Evil Is Past: On Retrospective Politics, Philosophy of History, and Temporal Manichaeism. *History and Theory* 54(3): 333–352.
- Boswell, John. 1980. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, Wendy. 2001. *Politics Out of History*. Princeton University Press.
- Chitty, Christopher. 2020. *Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System*. Duke University Press.
- Dahl, Stephan. 2020. Ethical Issues in Marketing to the LGBT Community: Of Becoming Visible and Being Targeted. In: *The SAGE Handbook of Marketing Ethics*, edited by Lynne Eagle, Stephan Dahl, Patrick De Pelsmacker & Charles Taylor (184–195). Sage.
- Dayantis, Jean. 2009. *Doukas, un historien byzantin du 15^e siècle: entre Grecs et Turcs*. Gorgias Press.
- Derrida, Jacques, trans. Peggy Kamuf. 2006/1993. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Routledge.
- Dinshaw, Carolyn. 1999. *Getting Medieval*. Duke University Press.

- . 2007. Temporalities. In: *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, edited by Paul Strohm (107–123). Oxford University Press.
- Donghaile, Deaglán Ó. 2020. *Oscar Wilde and the Radical Politics of the Fin de Siècle*. Edinburgh University.
- Duggan, Lisa. 1995. The Discipline Problem. *GLQ* 2(3): 179–191.
- . 2002. The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism. In: *Mate-rializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, edited by Russ Castronovo & Dana Nelson (175–194). Duke University Press.
- . On Being Difficult, *Commie Pinko Queer*, July 7, 2021, <https://lisaduggan.substack.com/p/on-being-difficult>.
- Edelman, Lee. 2004. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Duke University Press.
- Eng, David, Jack/Judith Halberstam & José Esteban Muñoz. 2005. What's Queer about Queer Studies Now? *Social Text* 23(3–4): 1–17.
- Engebretsen, Elisabeth L. 2021. “Cake is not an Attack on Democracy”: Moving beyond Carceral Pride and Building Queer Coalitions in Post–22/7 Norway. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 29(4): 234–247.
- Evans, Gareth Lloyd. 2019. *Men and Masculinities in the Sagas of Icelanders*. Oxford University Press.
- Fladmoe, Audun & Marjan Nadim. 2023. *Omfang og konsekvenser av hets og hatytringer i kritiske perioder Erfaringer fra koronapandemien (2020–2022) og skytingen ved London pub og apekoppbuddet (sommeren 2022)*. Institutt for samfunnsforskning.
- Foldy, Michael S. 1997. *The Trails of Oscar Wilde*. Yale University Press.
- Førland, Tor Egil. 2017. *Values, Objectivity, and Explanation in Historiography*. Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. 1994. *Histoire de la sexualité, tome I: La volonté de savoir*. Gallimard.
- Freccero, Carla. 2007. Queer Times. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106(3): 485–494.
- Frogner, Emanuel Totland. 2023. *Oscar Wildes kritiske essays*. Solum Bokvennen.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. Free Press.
- Galván-Álvarez, Enrique. 2010. Epistemic Violence and Retaliation: The Issue of Knowledges in ‘Mother India’. *Atlantis* 32(2): 11–26.
- Gleeson, Jules. 2022. Histories of People, Histories of Rupture. *Salvage* 11.
- Grande, Trine Skei, Pridemottakelse, *regjeringen.no*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumentarkiv/regjeringen-solberg/aktuelt-regjeringen-solberg/kud/taler-og-innlegg/ministerens-taler-og-artikler/taler-og-artikler-av-kulturministeren/2019/pridemottakelse/id2660897/>.
- Grecu, Vasile, ed. 1958. *Ducas: Istoria Turco-Bizantina (1341–1462)*. Academia Republicae Romanae.
- Halberstam, Jack/Judith. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press.
- . 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Duke University Press.

- Halperin, David. 2019. Queer Love. *Critical Inquiry* 45(2): 396–419.
- . 2002. *How to do the History of Homosexuality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Halsos, Martin Skaug. 2001. *§ 213 i almindelig borgerlig straffelov av 1902: Homoseksualitet i Norge og rettslige sanksjoner mot den fra slutten av 1800-tallet til 1972*. PhD diss., University of Oslo.
- . 2007. Norway 1842–1972: When Public Interest Demands. In: *Criminally Queer: Homosexuality and Criminal Law in Scandinavia 1842–1999*, edited by Jens Rydström & Kati Mustola (91–116). Aksant.
- Huitfeldt, Anniken, Grusomt angrep på London Pub, *regjeringen.no*, June 25, 2022, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/grusomt-angrep-pa-londonpub/id2920929/>.
- Human Rights Watch. 2008. This Alien Legacy: The Origins of ‘Sodomy’ Laws in British Colonialism. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/lgbt1208_webwcover.pdf
- Jacobsen, Christine. 2018. The (In)egalitarian Dynamics of Gender Equality and Homotolerance in Contemporary Norway. In: *Egalitarianism in Scandinavia: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Synnøve Bendixsen, Mary Bente Bringslid & Halvard Vike (313–335). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jakobsson, Ármann. 2011. Óðinn as Mother: The Old Norse Deviant Patriarch. *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 126: 5–16.
- Jansen, Pia Therese, Christoffer Conrad Eriksen, Siren Hoven, Anders Løberg, Jacob Aasland Ravndal, Christina Lill Rolfheim-Bye & Gisle Skoglund. 2023. *Rapport fra 25. juni-utvalget: Evaluering av PST og politiet*. Politidirektoratet.
- Jenkins, Keith. 2009. *At the Limits of History*. Routledge.
- Kehl, Katharina. 2024. *Boundaries of Queerness: Homonationalism and Racial Politics in Sweden*. Bristol University Press.
- Kinloch, Matthew. 2021. Reframing Medieval Anatolia, Caucasia, and the Aegean: Narratives, States, and Cities. *Medieval Worlds* 14: 6–21.
- . 2022. Stories of Emperors, Sultans, and Cities: Comparing Protagonists in the Histories of Doukas and Leonardo Bruni. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 46(2): 1–18.
- Klatran, Henning Kaiser. 2021. Queer Citizens and the Perils of the Neoliberal City: Racialized Narratives of Homophobic Hate Crime in Oslo, Norway. *Sexualities* 0(0): 1–16, online first.
- Kleinberg, Ethan. 2017. *Haunting History: For a Deconstructive Approach to the Past*. Stanford University Press.
- Lagerman, Julia. 2023. *A Nationalist Contradiction: Homonationalism and Nationalist Anti-LGBTQ Politics and Activism in Sweden*. PhD diss., Uppsala University.
- Lilleås, Heidi Schei & Alexander Winger, Det er et av skjelettene Erna frykter, *Nettavisen*, October 16, 2013, <https://www.nettavisen.no/artikkel/det-er-et-av-skjelettene-erna-frykter-frykter/s/12-95-3695684>.

- Liu, Petrus. 2015. *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas*. Duke University Press.
- Love, Heather. 2009. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Harvard University Press.
- Løvold, Ane Hedvig Heidrunsdotter. 2014. The Silence in Sápmi – and the Queer Sami Breaking it. Masters diss., The Arctic University of Norway.
- Magoulias, Harry, trans. 1975. *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*. Wayne State University Press.
- Masterson, Mark. 2022. *Between Byzantine Men: Desire, Homosociality, and Brotherhood in the Medieval Empire*. Routledge.
- Messis, Charis, 2020. Lorsque la périphérie assiège le centre: certains aspects des relations entre Byzantins et Turcs entre XIIIe et XVe siècles. In: *La culture écrite des périphéries byzantines du Moyen-Âge à l'époque moderne Actes de la session organisée dans le cadre du XIIe Congrès international d'études sud-est européennes (Bucarest, 2-6 septembre 2019)*, edited by Paolo Odorico (75–87). Herlo Verlag.
- . 2014. *Les Eunouques à Byzance, Entre Réalité Et Imaginaire*. Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, Dossiers byzantins.
- . 2006. *La construction sociale, les "réalités" rhétoriques et les représentations de l'identité masculine à Byzance*. PhD diss., École des hautes études en sciences sociales.
- Miller, William. 1926. The Historians Doukas and Phrantzes. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 46(1): 63–71.
- Mishkova, Diana. 2022. *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mühleisen, Wencke, Åse Røthing & Stine Helena Bang Svendsen. 2012. Norwegian Sexualities: Assimilation and Exclusion in Norwegian Immigration Policy. *Sexualities* 15(2): 139–155.
- Neville, Leonora. 2019. *Byzantine Gender*. ARC Humanities Press.
- . 2018. *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ostasz, Wiktor. 2014. The Daughter at the Frontier of the 'Holy Family': Towards a Politico-Theological Anatomy of Imperial Power in Anatolia, c.1000–c.1500. Conference paper, University of Warsaw, November 17–18. https://www.academia.edu/8001280/The_Daughter_at_the_Frontier_of_the_Holy_Family_Towards_a_Politico-Theological_Anatomy_of_Imperial_Power_in_Anatolia_c_1000_c_1500?fbclid=IwAR3kKn9hCEZD1z4Lhjy6qoIFBT_3TkWdT5Y4CMFJQH4oREAAZSirVv4iqQ
- Pérez, Moira. 2016. Queer Politics of History: On Progress Narratives and its Outcasts. *lambda nordica* 21(3–4): 15–34.
- Polemis, Ioannis. 2021. A Rhetorical Genre (?): The *Invective* (Ninth–Fifteenth Centuries). In: *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, edited by Stratis Papaioannou (336–347). Oxford University Press.
- Puar, Jasbir K. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press.

- . 2013. Rethinking Homonationalism. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45(2): 336–339.
- Rao, Rahul. 2020. *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality*. Oxford University Press.
- Rexhepi, Piro. 2016. From Orientalism to Homonationalism: Queer Politics, Islamophobia and Europeanization in Kosovo. *Southeastern Europe* 40(1): 32–53.
- Robinson, Douglas. 2008. *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht*. John Hopkins University Press.
- Rydström, Jens & Kati Mustola, eds. 2007. *Criminally Queer: Homosexuality and Criminal Law in Scandinavia 1842–1999*. Aksant.
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. Pantheon Books.
- Smarnakis, Ioannis. 2015. Rethinking Roman Identity After the Fall (1453): Perceptions of ‘Romanitas’ by Doukas and Sphrantzes. *Byzantina Symmeikta* 25: 211–234.
- Solberg, Erna, Regjeringens Pride-mottakelse, *regjeringen.no*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumentarkiv/regjeringen-solberg/aktuelt-regjeringen-solberg/smk/taler-og-innlegg/statsministeren/talerogartikler/2019/regjeringens-pride-mottakelse/id2660869/>
- Støre, Jonas Gahr, Statsminister Jonas Gahr Støres tale i regjeringenskvartalet 22. juli 2022, *regjeringen.no*, July 22, 2022, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/statsminister-jonas-gahr-stores-tale-i-regjeringenskvartalet-22.-juli-2022/id2923089/>
- Talbot, Alice-Mary. 1991. Doukas. In: *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, edited by Kazhdan, Alexander P. Oxford University Press.
- Thorsen, Lars, Strålende markering mot islam ved Stortinget: Oslo rister av seg islamtåka, *sian.no*, September 9, 2018, <https://www.sian.no/artikkel/oslo-rister-av-seg-islamtaka>.
- Todorova, Maria. 1997. *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford University Press.
- Vassenden, Anders & Mette Andersson. 2011. Whiteness, Non-Whiteness and ‘Faith Information Control’: Religion Among Young People in Grønland, Oslo. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34(4): 574–593.
- White, Hayden. 1973. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*. John Hopkins University Press.
- . 1978. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. John Hopkins University Press.
- Wright, Christopher. 2014. *The Gattilusio Lordships and the Aegean World 1355–1462*. Brill.

NOTES

1. This article was completed within the framework of the project, *Narrative Hierarchies: Minor Characters in Byzantine and Medieval History Writing*, funded the Research Council of Norway (project nr. 324754). It was written and submitted to *lambda nordica* in 2022 for a special issue on *Homonationalism and Right-Wing*

- Political Discourses in the Nordic Countries*, which has been delayed several times and eventually cancelled. Its current form is to some extent an artifact of this moment of composition and intended context of publication.
2. For the Greek critical edition and the English translation, see respectively Greco 1958 (hereafter Doukas *History*) and Magoulias trans. 1975. On Doukas generally, to various degrees of depth, see Miller 1926; Talbot 1991, 656; Dayantis 2009; Smarnakis 2015; Neville 2018, 298–301.
 3. Doukas *History*, 2.5.
 4. On the Gattilusio possessions in the Aegean, see Wright 2014.
 5. On the role of rulers as protagonists in Byzantine historiography and their combination with the state in the historiography of Anatolia and the Caucasus, see Kinloch (2022, 2021).
 6. Doukas *History*, 25.9. Magoulias trans. 1975: 151. Note that in his English translation of this passage, Harry Magoulias inverts the word order, so that it reads “males and females” instead of respecting the Greek word order “females and males”.
 7. Doukas *History*, 26.2.
 8. Doukas *History*, 26.2.
 9. Doukas *History*, 9.1; Magoulias trans. 1975: 72–73.
 10. On the protagonists in Doukas’ *History*, see Kinloch (2022).
 11. For a specifically queer reading of this passage, see Andrews and Kalpaklı (2005, 1–9).
 12. Doukas *History*, 40.5.
 13. Doukas *History*, 40.6.
 14. Doukas *History*, 40.6–7.
 15. Doukas *History*, 40.8.
 16. The role of eunuchs is also relevant in the case of Mustafa/Juneid, see Doukas *History*, 24.8.
 17. See Messis (2020, 80–81) on the conflation of anti-unionism and sodomy. Note the specific reference to the Notaras case, given his production by the pro-union Doukas as an anti-Unionist and Turkophile who had facilitated the Ottoman conquest only to receive his just deserts.
 18. Regarding penetrative metaphors in earlier periods and specifically the role of the daughter and phallic representations of fortifications on the twelfth-century Byzantine-Seljuk frontier, see Ostasz (2014).
 19. On the early-modern origins of the academic discipline of Byzantine studies, its entanglement with Ottoman incursions into central Europe, see the recent collection of essays edited by Nathanael Aschenbrenner and Jake Ransohoff (2021).
 20. On the relationship between progress narratives and modernity, see Brown (2001, esp. 5–17). For relevant analyses of the related Swedish context, see Kehl (2024) and Lagerman (2023).

21. On the ambiguity and misapplication of the term, see Puar (2013).
22. Grande 2019.
23. Solberg 2019. On §213, see Halsos (2001). Although prosecution was only allowed if deemed to be in the public interest. For an official outline of *Skeivt kulturår 2022*, see <https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/aktuelt/2021/skeivt-kulturar-feiring-for-hele-landet/>.
24. On the racialisation of Grønland Klatran follows Vassenden and Andersson (2011).
25. In the Kosovan context, Piro Rhexhepi has demonstrated how homophobic attacks are used “to discipline and ostracize Muslim communities in the Balkans as intolerant, backward, traditional, and irrational, while the EU is naturalized as tolerant, progressive, modern, and rational” (Rexhepi 2016, 49).
26. For another forceful critique, with specific reference to love, see Edelman’s description: “Before the self-righteous bromides of liberal pluralism spill from our lips, before we supply once more the assurance that ours is another kind of love but a love like his nonetheless, before we piously invoke the litany of our glorious contributions to the civilizations of East and West alike [...]” (2004, 16). For a more general reflection on queer love, see Halperin’s essay on the topic (2019).
27. For discussion of the relative leniency of this legislation and the rarity of its application, see Halsos (2007).
28. Even if it is just a typographical error, it is illustrative of the lack of temporal framework in both Grande and Solberg’s speeches that the copy written for this event for regjeringen.no mistakenly understood that the anniversary being celebrated was “i år [this year]” (i.e., 2019) (Anon. 2019)
29. On the broader colonial legacies in queer history see Rao (2020). On the best-known example, namely British exportation of anti-sodomy laws to its colonial possessions, see Rao (2020, esp. 1–32) and the Human Rights Watch report, “This Alien Legacy: The Origins of ‘Sodomy’ Laws in British Colonialism” (2008).
30. For an example within the context of *Skeivt kulturår 2022* see the press for an exhibition at KODE|Kunstmuseer og komponisthjem under the subheading “Antikke myter og skeive vikinger [Ancient Myths and Queer Vikings]” (2022).
31. See also Jules Gleeson’s framing of ethnicising and genealogical approaches to queer history (2022). I am grateful to her for valuable feedback on an early draft of this text.
32. I am grateful to Emanuel Totland Frogner for sharing a pre-print draft of his Norwegian translation of Wilde’s critical essays with me (2023).
33. Note that in the same passage, Duggan also identified the critique of narratives that posit the progress of history as a fundamental element of queer theory (1991, 181).
34. “On Being Difficult”, see Lisa Duggan’s light-hearted essay (2021), and on (queer) complaint, see Ahmed (2021).

35. This last question has also recently been asked by a queer historian of Byzantium (Masterson 2022).
36. On pinkwashing, the strategy of promoting LGBT rights as evidence of liberalism, by both states and companies, see Puar (2013) and Dahl (2020).
37. “Når Muhammed jobbet skjorta av seg for å undertrykke, voldta og steine kvinnerfolk, samt å henrette homofile på ymse vis, er det kuriøst å stadig observere disse i iherdig dødsdans til islams fremme. [When Muhammad worked so hard [lit. worked his shirt off] to oppress, rape, and stone women, as well as to execute homosexuals in various ways, it is curious to constantly observe them in a persistent dance of death for the advancement of Islam]” (Thorsen 2018).
38. *FrP*’s Solveig Horne is well-known for her much-mocked homophobic tweet “Er det helt greit at barnehagene leser homoeventyr for små barn? [Is it absolutely fine for kindergartens to read gay fairy tales to young children?]” (Lilleås & Winger 2013).
39. The consequences of this narrative for people today are captured viscerally by the words of Omar Orhan Akhtar (2022), an activist with Salam Norge, an organisation for queers in Norway with Muslim heritage.
40. On experiences of queer and ethnic minority groups of hate and hate speech after the shooting, see the Institute for Social Research’s report (Fladmoe & Nadim 2023).
41. This phrasing is itself reminiscent of some of the phrasing used in response to the 22/7 terrorist attack, on which generally see Engebretsen (2021).