We Are Becoming More Like You

Inclusions and Exclusions at the Intersection of Queerness, Neoliberalism, and Nation in Iceland 1990–2010

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Dissertation towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Við erum að verða líkari ykkur hinum

Innlimanir og útilokanir á skurðpunkti hinseginleika, nýfrjálshyggju og þjóðernis á Íslandi 1990–2010

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Ritgerð til doktorsgráðu

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Ágrip

Þessi ritgerð greinir nýlega íslenska hinsegin sögu með áherslu á árin 1990–2010. Á þessu tímabili færðust íslenskir hommar og lesbíur frá því að vera utangarðs utan þjóðarímyndarinnar og tóku sér stöðu innan hennar. Löggjöf um staðfesta samvist milli samkynja para tók gildi árið 1996, vernd gegn mismunun og rétturinn til ættleiðinga fylgdi á hæla hennar, en jafnrétti til hjónabands náðist árið 2010 undir ríkisstjórn fyrsta samkynhneigða forsætisráðherra heims. Þessi saga er orðin hluti af sjálfsmynd Íslendinga sem sjá þjóðina sem „hinsegin útópíu" eða „hinsegin paradís": hún er merki um einstakt umburðarlyndi, fjölbreytileika og framfarir þjóðarinnar.

Þessi ritgerð gagnrýnir þessa viðteknu frásögn í gegnum kenningar Benedicts Anderson um þjóðir og þjóðernishyggju, kenningar Michel Foucault um kynverund og nýfrjálshyggju, kenningar Lisu Duggan um samkynhneigð viðmið, kenningar Jasbir Puar um samkynhneigða þjóðernishyggju og kenningar Söru Ahmed um hrif. Með sifjafræðilegri greiningu og orðræðugreiningu á opinberum heimildum—greinum í dagblöðum og tímaritum, opinberum skýrslum, predikunum, þingræðum, heimildamyndum, viðtölum—birtist önnur sýn á nýlega íslenska hinsegin sögu þar sem hinsegin fólk endurstaðsetur sig gagnvart risi stjórnvaldstækni nýfrjálshyggjunnar á Íslandi á 10. áratugnum. Sumir urðu hluti af hinu endurímyndaða samfélagi þjóðarinnar sem hafði umfaðmað samkynhneigð viðmið og samkynhneigða þjóðernishyggju en aðrir—sérstaklega trans, tvíkynhneigt og kynsegin fólk—hurfu sjónum.

Þessi ritgerð setur fram röksemdafærslu sína með fjórum greinum. Sú fyrsta rannsakar sameiginlegu minninguna um sögu réttindabaráttu homma og lesbía sem tók að mótast upp úr aldamótum. Þessi minning sléttir út allt sem gæti flækt línulegu framfarafrásögnina af innlimun homma og lesbía inn í þjóðina. Útilokanir á öðrum hinsegin hópum falla utan minningarinnar og virkt hlutverk ríkisins í því að ná þessum innlimunum og útilokunum fram er gleymt og grafið. Sögulegu samhengi aðlagana að nýfrjálshyggju er haldið utan sviðs og skilyrðin sem lögð voru fyrir homma og lesbíur—eðlileiki og þjóðerni í skiptum fyrir hjónaband og virðuleika—eru skilin eftir ósögð.

Önnur greinin færir rök fyrir því að baráttan um jafnrétti til hjónabands hafi orðið að miðpunkti stjórnvaldstækni og sjálfsverusköpunar nýfrjálshyggjunnar á rannsóknartímabilinu. Þegar bæði ríkið og samfélag homma og lesbía tók að samsama sig kröfunni um jafnrétti til hjónabands á 10. og 1. áratugnum tók samband þeirra að breytast. Á Íslandi er hægt að rannsaka þetta ferli óvenjulega grannt út af „norræna samrunanum" sem finnst þar milli þjóðkirkjunnar, ríkisins og þjóðarinnar, en það var hefð fyrir því að sjá þetta þrennt sem svo gott sem eitt. Þegar þjóðkirkjan snerist gegn jafnrétti til hjónabands á grundvelli andstöðu sinnar gegn nýfrjálshyggju, þá færðist hún í átt að jaðri þjóðarímyndarinnar á meðan sá hluti samfélags homma og lesbía sem

sóttist eftir hjónabandi færðist nær ríkinu í miðju hennar. Í þessu ferli styrkti nýfrjálshyggjan tök sín á fólki og stofnunum með því að vera tengd framförum, jafnrétti og sjálfri þjóðinni.

Þriðja greinin færir fyrir því rök að ris gleðinnar sem táknmyndar Reykjavík Pride-göngunnar—eða "gleðigöngunnar" eins og hún er svo oft kölluð—hafi virkað sem aðferð til að innleiða samkynhneigð viðmið og samkynhneigða þjóðernishyggju. Með notkun hrifakenninga skoðar greinin orðræðurnar í kringum gleðigönguna sem kynna hana sem afl sem sameinar í gleði hinsegin fólkið í göngunni annarsvegar og þjóðina sem horfir á hana hins vegar. Þar með þurrkar gangan út eða kemur í staðinn fyrir liðna fordóma og sár sem voru til milli þeirra tveggja. Í staðinn birtist gleði og þakklæti göngufólksins í garð þjóðarinnar fyrir veitt samþykki sitt í samtímanum. Á þennan hátt gerir gleðigangan Íslendinga glaða og stolta af sameiningu sinni en afneitar fortíðinni og blæs nýju lífi í íslenska þjóðernishyggju á nýrri öld, sem jafnframt felur í sér útilokanir á útlendingum og innflytjendum.

Fjórða greinin sýnir hvernig sjálfsverustaða nýfrjálshyggjunnar laumaðist inn í sjálfsframsetningar homma á rannsóknartímabilinu. Með hliðsjón af orðræðugreiningu á lífsstílsviðtölum við homma í glanstímaritum heldur greinin því fram að hommarnir hafi sett sig sjálfa fram og verið mótaðir sem ábyrgir, hamingjusamir nýfrjálshyggjuborgarar. Þetta gera þeir í gegnum orðræður sem ganga út á jákvæðni, hamingju, sjálfsvinnu og athafnamennsku, en einnig með því að færa ábyrgðina á sárum og fordómum fortíðarinnar frá hómófóbískum samfélagsstrúktúrum og yfir á þá sjálfa og þeirra eigin fordóma fyrir sjálfum sér. Þetta frelsar þjóðina undan sök og gerir innlimun í hana mögulega, innlimun sem er laus við átök, yfirbót eða skilning á fortíðinni.

Saman sýna greinarnar fjórar hvernig orðræður um þjóðerni, hinseginleika og nýfrjálshyggju sköruðust á rannsóknartímabilinu og mótuðu nýjar hugmyndir, bæði um hið eðlilega og jafnframt um hinseginleika og framandleika. Nýfrjálshyggja öðlaðist nýja stöðu sem mælistika þjóðernis og hins eðlilega. Með því að tengja sig við gleði og framfarir þjóðarinnar hafnaði hin nýja, nýfrjálshyggjuvædda þjóðarímynd gagnrýnu, reiðu hinsegin fólki og öðrum, sérstaklega innflytjendum, sem voru settir fram sem vanþróaðir, ómóttækilegir fyrir nýfrjálshyggju og hómófóbískir í senn.

Á þessari stundu, þegar róttækar breytingar eru að verða á virkni stjórnvaldstækni nýfrjálshyggjunnar með risi öfgahægrisins á Vesturlöndum, þá sýnir þessi saga hversu fallvölt réttindi og samþykki hinsegin fólks eru ef þau eru byggð á því að aðlaga sig nýfrjálshyggjunni. Þetta sýnir einnig hver leiðin fram á við gæti verið: gagnrýni, samtakamáttur og andstaða sem beinist gegn nýfrjálshyggjunni í sjálfri sér.

Lykilorð:

Ísland, hinsegin saga, 1990–2010, nýfrjálshyggja, þjóðerni

Abstract

This thesis examines recent Icelandic queer history, focusing on the years 1990–2010. During this period, Icelandic gays and lesbians moved from an outsider to an insider position within the national imaginary. A law allowing civil partnership between same-sex couples was passed in 1996, protection against discrimination and adoption rights soon followed, while full marriage equality was reached in 2010 under the government of the world's first openly homosexual prime minister. This story has become a part of Icelanders' self-representation of their nation as a "queer utopia" or "queer paradise", a sign of the nation's exceptional tolerance, diversity, and progressiveness.

This thesis critiques this received narrative through the theoretical positions of Benedict Anderson's critique of nation and nationalism, Michel Foucault's critique of sexuality and neoliberalism, Lisa Duggan's critique of homonormativity, Jasbir Puar's critique of homonationalism, and Sara Ahmed's theory of affect. Through genealogical and discourse analysis of public sources—newspaper and journal articles, official reports, church sermons, parliamentary speeches, documentaries, interviews—another view of recent Icelandic queer history emerges, in which LGBTQ+ subjects reposition themselves in response to the rise of neoliberal governmentality in Iceland in the 1990s, with some becoming part of the reimagined community of the homonormative, homonationalist nation, while others—especially trans, bisexual, and genderqueer people and radical gays and lesbians—receded from the national view.

This thesis makes its argument through four papers. The first analyses the collective memory of the history of the gay and lesbian rights struggle which started to emerge in the 2000s. This memory smoothed out anything that could complicate the progressive linearity of gay and lesbian inclusion into the nation. Exclusions of other queer groups were overlooked and the active role of the state in bringing about the inclusions/exclusions was buried. The historical context of adaptations to neoliberalism was kept out of view and the conditions laid for gays and lesbians—normality and nationality through marriage and respectability—left out.

The second paper argues that the struggle for marriage equality became a nexus of neoliberal governmentality and subjectivization during the research period. As both the state and the gay and lesbian community came to identify themselves with the cause of marriage equality in the 1990s and 2000s, their relationship shifted. In Iceland, this process can be studied in unusual detail because of the "Nordic fusion" found there between National Church, state, and nation, the three traditionally being seen almost as one. As the National Church opposed marriage equality on anti-neoliberal terms, it moved towards the margins of the national imaginary while the marriage-aspiring gay

and lesbian community moved towards the state in the centre. In the process, neoliberalism strengthened its hold on people and institutions as it became identified with progress, equality, and the nation.

The third paper argues that the emergence of joy as the emblem of the Reykjavík Pride Parade—popularly called "the March of Joy"—served as a technology for the implementation of homonormativity and homonationalism. Through the use of affect theory, the paper analyses the discourses around the March of Joy which present it as unifying in joy the marching, LGBTQ+ people on the one hand and the spectating nation on the other. Thereby, the march erases or overrides past hurts and prejudices between the two, replacing them with the marchers' joyous gratitude towards the nation for its acceptance in the present. Thus, the March of Joy makes Icelanders joyfully proud of their past-denying unity and serves to revitalize Icelandic nationalism for a new century, with concomitant exclusions of foreigners and immigrants.

The fourth paper shows how neoliberal subjectivity crept into gay men's self-representations during the research period. Through discourse analysis of lifestyle interviews with gay men in glossy magazines, the article argues that the men came to represent themselves and be constructed as responsible, happy, neoliberal citizens through discourses of positivity and happiness, self-work and entrepreneurialism, and the displacement of past hurts and prejudices from homophobic social structures onto the men themselves and their own self-prejudice. This frees the nation from blame and allows for inclusion without confrontation, compensation, or understanding of the past.

Taken together, the four papers show how discourses of nationality, queerness, and neoliberalism intersected over the research period to construct radically new ideas of the normal and the national and thus of the queer and the foreign. Neoliberalism came to occupy a new position as the arbiter of nationality and normality. Associated with the emotion of joy and the progress of the nation, the new, neoliberal national imaginary rejected critical, angry queers and national others, especially immigrants, who were constructed as at once anti-neoliberal, backwards, and homophobic.

In the current moment of radical shifts in the functioning of neoliberal governmentality, with the rise of the far right in the West, this shows the precarity of LGBTQ+ people's rights and social acceptance based on adaptations to neoliberalism, while indicating the way forward: critique, alliance, and resistance against the neoliberal project itself.

Keywords:

Iceland, queer history, 1990–2010, neoliberalism, nation

Acknowledgements

I came into this PhD-project from what may perhaps seem a strange angle. My background is in Classics, i.e., the study of Greek and Latin, the Classical World, and the reception of ancient texts into the present. However, the study of Classics is so old and sacrosanct in the university system that it has largely escaped the process of disciplinary categorization which has broken so many other fields of study into ever smaller specializations. Under the rubric of Classics, one can take courses on a great variety of topics which, outside of the discipline, tend to get put into the specialized fields of archaeology, history, linguistics, literature, gender studies, queer theory, and so on. Early on in my studies in Classics, I became fascinated with the study of sex and sexuality, censorship, and reception theory; this led me to the theories of Michel Foucault, the history of sexuality, and queer history, all of which have strong links with the Classics. This led me, in the end, to this PhD-thesis. I would not classify it as a thesis in the field of Classics, but the kind of ideological development that led me here is, to my mind, a direct result of the versatility and openness of that old and venerable but still potent and even radical field of study. So, I would first like to thank my many teachers in Classics throughout the years (and especially the first, Kolbrún Elfa Sigurðardóttir): this thesis is a product of their teaching.

The thesis is part of a research project called "From Sexual Outlaws to Model Citizens: The Relations Between Queer Sexualities and Nationality in Iceland 1944–2010". The project was funded by a grant from RANNÍS, the Icelandic Centre for Research (grant no. 206625-051). I am grateful to RANNÍS for funding the project, which, without any doubt, has been enormously important for Icelandic queer history and queer studies. I am also most grateful to the organizers of the "Sexual Outlaws" project for including me in it as a PhD-student in 2020. First among the project's three organizers, I would like to thank my supervisor, Íris Ellenberger, Associate Professor of History at the University of Iceland. As incisive an historian as she is great company, one could not wish for a better supervisor. Secondly, my thanks go to Ásta Kristín Benediktsdóttir, Assistant Professor of Icelandic Contemporary Literature at the University of Iceland. Her amazingly prolific work over the last few years has changed the game in the study of queer literature in Iceland and been an inspiration for me. She is also a dear friend. Thirdly, I want to thank Hafdís Erla Hafsteinsdóttir, historian and fellow PhD-student at the University of Iceland under the aegis of the "Sexual Outlaws" project. Hafdís' work is, to my mind, the most important result of that project, offering a radically new viewpoint of nationality and queerness in the face of AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s. Our friendship goes back to our exchange student days in Berlin in 2009–2010, where our conversations helped turn my academic interests in a queer direction. In this way,

Hafdís has been an important factor in my development as an academic and I am grateful to her. I would also like to thank other dear friends I made in Berlin who shared my interest in the study of gender, sex, and sexuality: historian and poet Kristín Svava Tómasdóttir and film scholar Guðrún Elsa Bragadóttir.

I started work on this PhD-project in 2020, at the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic. For almost two years, I worked mostly alone at home or in my deserted shared office at the University of Iceland. This depressing period has amply shown me how grateful one must be for good company in one's workplace. Hence, I would like to thank two fellow PhD-students at the University of Iceland's School of Education with whom I shared an office after the pandemic: Hrafnhildur Snæfríðardóttir Gunnarsdóttir and Tinna Ólafsdóttir. I will miss our benign distractions and discussions.

In 2022–2023, I undertook an ERASMUS+ Traineeship Program at the University of Copenhagen. I was invited to work alongside the members of the University's Centre for Gender Studies, whose scholar- and comradeship was an inspiration. First among them, I would like to thank my co-supervisor, Michael Nebeling Petersen, Associate Professor of Gender Studies. His insights were always incisive and his cheer infectious. The example of his magisterial PhD-thesis was a source of both inspiration and envious despair for my own. I also benefited from courses taught by Michael and Camilla Bruun Eriksen, Associate Professor of Gender Studies, whom I would like to thank especially; Paper III of this thesis is highly influenced by her. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Mons Bissenbakker, PhD-student Anton Juul, Postdoc Tobias Haimin de Fønss Wung-Sung, and Postdoc Bolette Frydendahl Larsen, all of whom became dear friends of mine through their exemplary hospitality and generosity towards me during my stay in Copenhagen.

The largest influence on my work on this thesis, however, does not come from a university, whether that of Iceland or that of Copenhagen, but my children. In 2021, my wife, historian, archivist, and author Ragnhildur Hólmgeirsdóttir, gave birth to my younger son Eyjólfur. My life schedule was already dominated by my older son Tumi but after the birth of his brother, said schedule became even more iron-bound to my children's routines. Hence, this thesis is written near-exclusively in weekday working hours while my sons were in preschool: contrary to the PhD-student stereotype, not a single late night or weekend went into it, as these were fully occupied by child-rearing and exhausted sleep. My pre-fatherhood academic methods tended to be sprawling and unfocused: my sons, while generally making my life rather difficult, did teach me a new concision and focus on essentials which affect this thesis throughout.

Hence, I would first like to thank the teachers at my sons' preschools in Copenhagen (Jorn) and Reykjavík (Sæborg), for without their help this thesis would not exist. Secondly and even more importantly, I want to thank my wife, Ragnhildur, for everything. Lastly, I want to thank my sons Eyjólfur and Tumi for focusing me in their own peculiar way. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

S78: Samtökin '78, the National Queer Organization of Iceland (previously "the Organization of Homosexual People in Iceland", "the Organization of Lesbians and Gays in Iceland", and "the Organization of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals in Iceland").

List of Original Papers

This thesis is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV):

I. Vilhjálmsson, Þ. (2022). Into the Enclosure: Collective Memory and Queer History in the Icelandic Documentary "People Like That." *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 30(3), 208–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2022.2080257

II. Vilhjálmsson, Þ. (2024). The Centrifugal Force: Neoliberalism and Nationality in Iceland's Marriage Equality Debate 1996–2015. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, *33*(3), 390–417. https://doi.org/10.7560/JHS33304

III. Vilhjálmsson, Þ., & Ellenberger, Í. (2024). Queer Joy, Queer Killjoy: Queerness, Nation, and Affect in the Reykjavík Pride Parade 2000–2019. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13182

IV. Ellenberger, Í., & Vilhjálmsson, Þ. (2024). "No Bare Bottoms": The Responsibilization of the Good Gay Citizen in Icelandic Media Discourses 1990–2010. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 71(6), 1465–1486. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2023.2174472

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It should be noted that the School of Education requires a doctoral candidate to be the first or sole author of three papers in order to be eligible for a PhD-degree. Thus, the fourth paper of this thesis, of which the candidate is the second author, is outside of the formal requirements of the PhD-degree and should be seen as a complementary publication.

Declaration of Contribution

Papers I & II were planned, researched, and written by me alone. They were then read and reviewed by my supervisors in draft form before being submitted to journals. In the case of paper III, I did all the planning and the research, while I asked my supervisor Íris Ellenberger to write a part of the theory chapter. Afterwards, she closely read and reviewed the draft before submission. In the case of paper IV, my supervisor Íris Ellenberger did all the planning and the research. I was tasked with writing a short section about the historical background of the article's main argument (pp. 1470–1471). Afterwards, I read the draft closely and reviewed it before submission.

1 Introduction

On Pride Day, 10 August 2013, Iceland's most read newspaper, *Fréttablaðið,* devoted a full page to the history of Iceland's gay and lesbian rights struggle ("Réttindabarátta," 2013). Dominating the page is a timeline stretching from 1975 to 2013, tracing milestones in the struggle on the left side, juxtaposed with various events in the history of Iceland more generally on the right side. These include the 1975 Women's Day Off (ice. *Kvennafrídagur*), widely seen as a pivotal event in the Icelandic women's rights movement; the legalization of the sale of beer in 1988; the rise to fame of the singer Björk in 1997; and the consumption frenzy that notoriously gripped Iceland in 2007 and presaged the economic crash of 2008.

On the left side, the timeline starts off with the publication of the first on-the-record interview with an openly gay Icelander in 1975. From there, it traces the founding of Samtökin ´78 (abbr. S78), Iceland's National Queer Organization, in 1978; the first, tiny Reykjavík Pride march in 1993; the 1996 law introducing legal partnerships for same-sex couples; the first gender reassignment surgery performed in Iceland in 1997; the first "March of Joy" (ice. *gleðiganga,* the rebooted, much larger Pride parade; see Paper III) in 2000; the founding of Trans Ísland, the Icelandic Trans Organization, in 2007; and the passing of a trans rights law in parliament in 2012. The timeline ends in the contemporary present, 2013, with the capitalized words: "JOY REIGNS TODAY!"[1]

Alongside the timeline, interviews with three well-known gay and lesbian Icelanders appear. In one, an educator and one-time chairman of S78 declares that she is "particularly proud of the Icelandic nation. It doesn't even occur to it anymore that there's anything wrong with a lesbian or a gay man raising a child. Icelanders are such geniuses when they want to be". In another, a professor of political science traces the "history of homosexuality" in brief, starting from the Classical World, going through the World Wars, ending up in the Stonewall riot in New York, which was a "point of no return. We have entered the present". In the final interview, a musician relates how his father opposed his public coming out in the 1990s, while his mother supported him, insisting that "if I wanted to bring a boyfriend home, he was welcome to eat the same Sunday leg of lamb with the same brown sauce as everyone else. With that sentence, she encapsulated everything that our, gays and lesbians', rights struggle aims for. To sit at the same table as the others".

[1] All translations from Icelandic and Danish in this thesis are the author's.

At first glance, there may seem to be nothing remarkable about the *Fréttablaðið* story: it is a typical Pride Day feature conveying the good feelings associated with the day in Icelandic public discourse. However, if one looks closer, the story starts to reveal its problematic core. First, the timeline ties Iceland's recent history together with the history of the country's gay and lesbian rights struggle so that they become one: the struggle becomes *national,* not just gay and lesbian, history. Secondly, the story characterizes that history as one of *linear progress*, leading out of the black-and-white photographs of the 1970s accompanying the timeline, when Iceland, it is implied, was backwards, misogynistic, beer-banning, and homophobic, to the *colourful joy of the present*, when the nation has revealed its genius, its tolerance, and its modernity. There is nothing to fight for anymore, it implies; the struggle is over and they lived on happily ever after. Third, this contemporary moment is represented as at once inevitable and too long resisted. Once achieved, it brings *happiness and fulfilment*, while the past, conversely, is seen as unhappy and unfulfilled, in the throes of backwardness, paternalism, repression, and homophobia. The country had fundamentally changed in mere four decades, the timeline implies, and it was the gay and lesbian rights struggle that led the way.

Thus, this narrative identifies gays and lesbians and their struggle *with the nation*. The nation marched in step with Icelandic gays and lesbians towards the fulfilment of the desires *of both*. This narrative is teleological. It describes a march towards a stable present, inalterable and secure; going backwards is as impossible as travelling backwards in time. The telos is not just an abstract moment but also characterized by an emotion: *joy*. We, the nation, have cast off the past and joined the present, where we have found happiness along with "our" gays and lesbians: we are one family, sitting together at a single table, eating that homely, national, middle-class comfort dish: leg of lamb, brown sauce.

One may note how the timeline side-steps anything that might complicate the linearity of this teleological, joyous, presentist narrative. Most glaringly, the AIDS epidemic is simply skipped over; the 1980s, in the timeline, was a decade characterized by nothing more than Icelanders gaining the right to buy beer;[2] not a single event from the history of the gay and lesbian rights struggle is brought out from that silent decade. More subtly, there seems to be an invisible force hovering around the timeline, so implicated in events, so deeply *everywhere,* that its presence goes unremarked or unnoticed. For in Iceland, as in the rest of the world, the societal changes wrought between the 1970s and the 2010s are inexplicable without the rise of *neoliberalism*. This thesis views neoliberalism as much more than the economic doctrine of promoting business and

[2] Or, as the author Hallgrímur Helgason summed up recent Icelandic history in 2012: „First came the pizza, then the beer, and finally, the homo" (Helgason, 2012).

finance and privatizing state assets. Instead, neoliberalism is seen as a novel technology of power which transformed not only the world economy but the entire sphere of social relations in the West and beyond: an ideology underlying both the conduct of citizens and the policies of governments, whether left-wing or right-wing (see Section 2.2). Thus, neoliberalism's absence from the *Fréttablaðið* timeline is very telling indeed.

The timeline, in this way, unites the history of the lesbian and gay right struggle, the history of the nation, and the history of neoliberalism and equates all three with the same progressive arc. Thus, the timeline and the accompanying interviews construct a narrative and a collective memory through the foregrounding of some events and the backgrounding of others. This is a narrative and a memory, not only of recent Icelandic history, but of the *Icelandic nation, its history, its present, and its telos*. And that telos was reached—though the word is avoided—*through neoliberalism*. It is this discursive confluence of queerness, neoliberalism, and nation that this PhD-thesis aims to critique and study.

The time is now opportune for such an undertaking. While the *Fréttablaðið* story is a fine example of a collective memory rarely questioned in Iceland throughout the 2000s and 2010s, it has more recently come under pressure. First, the influential 2019 historical documentary series *Svona fólk* (*People Like That*) broke new ground in devoting an episode to the history of AIDS in Iceland, contributing to the epidemic's recent return to Icelandic collective memory (see Paper I). Secondly, over the 2020s, there has been a growing discourse about an anti-LGBTQ+ backlash in Iceland, with an apparent increase in hateful discourse online and homophobic vandalism and physical violence in the streets (Hjaltadóttir, 2023). In a recent article, a well-known lesbian ex-S78 activist reflected:

> Even I believed [that our full human rights had been won] … but for most queer people, we are always one step away from the goal. Our human rights are just a thin film. Or rather, a colourful oil slick covering everything, enough to calm the biggest waves. But, of course, it's too thin to restrain the forces rising up from the deep indefinitely, if it should blow up a storm (Sverrisdóttir, 2022).

So, it has become clear to many people that there is something inadequate about the view of history presented by the *Fréttablaðið* story. However, even in the ex-activist's article, the problem is presented as being a mere "one step away from the goal"; the current situation might then be a mere temporary deviation from a path that continues to lead forward and may be rejoined. In a similar way, the AIDS-crisis, though recently reintroduced into Icelandic collective memory, needs not disturb the linear, progressive view of history; it may be seen as a temporary and, in the long run, irrelevant setback from the straight and narrow path that leads into the happy, progressive, temporarily deferred "present" of joy and national togetherness. The progress narrative limps on.

As this PhD-thesis will argue, said narrative is not only unsatisfactory but also insidious. First, it focuses *only on gays and lesbians*, leaving other queer groups out of the frame; they may be mentioned in a tokenish fashion, but they never come into focus (as in the *Fréttablaðið* story, which mentions trans people twice in passing, but whose headline identifies the real subject as the "Lesbian and Gay Rights Struggle 1975–2013"). Secondly, by characterizing gays and lesbians' journey towards the joyous present as *passing through marriage legislation and aiming at national inclusion*, it disregards any gays and lesbians—not to mention other queer groups—who practice queer kinship structures outside of monogamy and marriage and have a critical stance towards the nation. Thirdly, in presenting the end goal of the struggle as *the emotional state of joy*, it pushes aside or erases other emotions, such as anger because of discrimination faced in the past or suspicion of the inclusions celebrated by the *Fréttablaðið* timeline. Fourth, in *erasing the role of neoliberalism* in recent Icelandic history, it paints neoliberalism as inevitable progress and opposition to it as backwards-looking, out of step with history, anti-national. Thus, the narrative is exclusionary as well as inclusionary. It is conditional; it makes demands. It is nationalist, creating an "us" and a "them". In short, it exercises power.

1.1 Aim of the Thesis

This PhD-thesis aims to analyse and critique this progressive, teleological narrative and collective memory of recent Icelandic history. Thus, the thesis' timeframe is marked, on the one hand, by neoliberalism's emergence as a dominant ideological force in Iceland in the 1990s, showcased by Iceland's first openly neoliberal government which took power in 1991 (Ólafsson, 2011); and on the other, by the high point of the progress narrative: the passing of marriage equality legislation in 2010. Of course, the papers of this thesis do stray back to the 1980s and forward into the 2010s; however, its focus is decidedly on those transformative two decades, 1990–2010. To understand the public discourses of the period, the thesis uses public sources for its data: official reports, parliament speeches, archival websites, books, and, most importantly, newspapers and journals.

Using this data, I aim to take a step back and ask two overarching research questions: 1) Where did the Icelandic LGBTQ+ progress narrative come from? and 2) What effect has it had? More specifically, I ask:

1) From what previously existing historical circumstances, discourses, and narratives did this new, progressive narrative emerge?
2) What memories, histories, and affects were created, promoted, or suppressed through it?
3) Who was included in the national imaginary through this process and who was excluded from it?

4) What did these inclusions and exclusions do to the imaginary of the Icelandic nation?
5) What did they do to LGBTQ+ Icelanders' representations, by themselves and others, in media and public discourse?
6) Who is empowered through the progress narrative and who is disempowered?

This focus is a narrow one: it should be clear that this thesis does *not* aim to be any kind of general overview of Icelandic queer history in the research period. Thus, the history of AIDS in Iceland is outside this thesis' purview, despite its great effect over the period; as I will discuss in the next section, another PhD-thesis, springing from the same research project as mine, is forthcoming on that topic, on whose turf I shall be careful not to tread. Of course, the AIDS epidemic is frequently mentioned in what follows, but its full implications will not be brought out or studied.

Further, my focus is on processes of national inclusion/exclusion of some, mainly gay and lesbian, LGBTQ+ people, on the emergence of progress narratives enshrining that process, and on the role of neoliberalism in both. This means that the thesis is concerned with power exercised from the centre of the national imaginary and adaptations to and resistances against that power. Thus, my viewpoint tends to be detached and concerned with structures rather than individuals; I rarely focus on stories of individual LGBTQ+ people's lives. This means that nationally included Icelandic gays and lesbians are over-represented in this thesis' data and analysis and thus, to an extent, it reproduces the exclusions of the progress narrative it critiques. Trans communities in the U.S. have long criticized this kind of "homonormativity": the unspoken norm of (male) homosexuality's predominance in queer activist work, history, and theory (Stryker, 2008; see also Section 2.4 below). What is more, focus on the nationally included, Western, white LGBTQ+ subject elides the ambiguous status or even the very existence of LGBTQ+ migrants, especially racialized migrants from the Global South (El-Tayeb, 2012). Thus, while I throw light on the processes of exclusion of bisexual and trans people and LGBTQ+ immigrants from the national imaginary, I rarely offer correctives in their place, i.e., biographies of trans and bisexual people and migrants who resisted these processes.

These limitations are connected to the sheer novelty of my field, Icelandic queer history. As I shall detail in the next section, academic queer history and theory in Iceland only took off in 2016, after these fields had been developing elsewhere for four decades; not only had they gone through a period of intense focus on empiricist data collection, aiming to create a new corpus of queer texts for study, they had also gone through decades of theoretical refinement and argument *critiquing* that empiricism. In peripheral places such as Iceland, which tends to be always "late" to any game (and especially this one), academics in queer theory and/or history are faced with a great difficulty. They feel they must "catch up" to their models by acquainting themselves with and making use of the latest theoretical advances in the field while possessing no

already extant corpus of texts to apply those theories to. Thus, they must play both the role of the empiricist hunter of previously unused texts *and* the theoretical critic of such empiricism. So, Icelandic queer history, burdened by the overwhelming task ahead of it, must advance slowly, acknowledging its own shortcomings in the hope that the next researcher might succeed where the previous one failed: we are very much taking first steps and inevitably stumbling.

Thus, I was unable to correct for the over-representation of nationally included, native lesbians and gays in my data; gathering what I found took up all the time I had. However, my approach will, I hope, aid future scholars in understanding how that national inclusion and the concomitant exclusions of other queer people were constructed—and how they may be resisted. Personally, I believe that the optimal corrective to the blind sides of my own approach would be a biographically-focused history bent on finding queer lives in the archive that resisted the normalizing processes I describe in this thesis—especially trans and bisexual lives and lives of LGBTQ+ migrants. This thesis' lack of such stories should not be seen as a rejection of their importance. Quite the contrary: ultimately, my approach shall only be successful if its limitations are made up for in future work.

1.2 Originality of the Thesis

This thesis is a contribution to the field of queer history and the history of sexuality, using theoretical insights from queer theory, critiques of neoliberalism, the study of nation and nationalism, memory theory, and affect theory. As such, it is a highly original contribution to Icelandic academia, though based on fields long established abroad. I will treat these fields in an international context in the theory chapter (Chapter 2). In this section, however, I will position this thesis in relation to previously published writing in Icelandic academia that touches on similar topics in order to show its original contribution to the local field, as well as briefly situating it in the context of new queer research in the Nordics and in the UK.

The history of LGBTQ+ people in Iceland was, until quite recently, documented at the grassroots, as opposed to the academic, level. Two history-leaning journals published by S78 to celebrate its 30th and 40th anniversaries deserve special attention (Ásgeirsdóttir, 2008a; Hafsteinsdóttir, 2020). *Hinsegin dagar í Reykjavík,* the NGO organizing Reykjavík Pride, has also published a number of articles on queer lives in Iceland in the 19th and 20th centuries in its annual journal (Ágústsson, 2016; Benediktsdóttir, 2012a; V. Birgisdóttir, 2018; "Í góðra kvenna hópi," 2016; Ingvarsson, 2003; Jónsdóttir, 2005; Kristinsson, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2016; Pétursson, 2008; Sverrisdóttir, 2004). While offering vital information on the history of S78 and the life possibilities of queer people before and after the start of the lesbian and gay rights struggle, these articles generally do not take a larger view, use

theoretical stances, or critique previous work; the focus was inwards, on documenting a history that was long ignored in Icelandic academia.

In Iceland, literary theory was instrumental in introducing queer perspectives to an academic context. Two seminal 1998 articles by Geir Svansson introduced Butlerian queer theory to Icelandic audiences and offered Icelandic translations of its most important terms which have since become standard (Svansson, 1998b, 1998a). Dagný Kristjánsdóttir continued to employ this theoretical basis in her studies of Icelandic literature (D. Kristjánsdóttir, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009) and her example was followed by Ásta Kristín Benediktsdóttir (2012a, 2012b).

Outside of literary studies, academic treatment of queer topics was, until very recently, rare. A number of articles on *ergi* and other forms of queerness in medieval Icelandic sources and texts appeared in the late 1990s and 2000s (Jakobsson, 2000; Jochens, 1999; Karlsson, 2006, 2013; Sävborg, 2007). Also of note are Einarsdóttir's (2013, 2016) sociological studies of same-sex partners; Ellenberger & Sigurðardóttir's (2014) article on heteronormativity and queer rights activism; S. A. Sigurðardóttir's (2007) article on the history of gender confirmation surgery; Kjaran's (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017) sociological work on LGBTQ+ students in Icelandic upper secondary schools, and a number of BA- and MA-theses in gender studies (Kristinsson, 2013b; S. A. Sigurðardóttir, 2011; Stefánsdóttir, 2013), history (Guðmundsson, 2015), museum studies (Jóhannsdóttir, 2018), and folkloristics (S. L. Birgisdóttir, 2014).

Academic studies in the field of Icelandic queer or LGBTQ+ history appeared sporadically from the late 1990s, such as Sigurðardóttir's study of male romantic friendship (S. Sigurðardóttir, 1998), Kristinsson's and Björnsdóttir's articles on the history of LGBTQ+ rights movements in Iceland (Björnsdóttir, 2006; Kristinsson, 2000), and Þorvaldsdóttir's (2007) important study of same-sex sexuality and Icelandic criminal law. Yet these articles were in the spirit of a new field just starting off, gathering and drawing attention to new sources and problems without, as yet, much emphasis on theorizing or contextualizing them. A new tone was struck in 2016, when Íris Ellenberger (2016) published an article on the intersection of gender and sexuality in the Icelandic feminist and lesbian movements of the 1980s. The article's use of the theoretical basis of intersectionality, gender studies, and queer theory was novel in Icelandic historiography. The publication, that same year, of Bragadóttir's (2016) article on queer alternatives to capitalism and neoliberalism strengthened the sense of a turn towards queer theory in the Icelandic humanities.

The following year, 2017, saw an explosion of academic work using queer theory. Most notably, it saw the publication of *Svo veistu að þú varst ekki hér: Hinsegin sagnfræði og hinsegin saga á Íslandi* [*And You Know You Were Never Here: Queer Historiography and Queer History in Iceland*], the first Icelandic peer-reviewed book dedicated to queer research in the humanities (Ellenberger et al., 2017). It includes chapters on the theoretical basis of queer history and historiography (Hafsteinsdóttir, 2017a), the image

of Iceland as a queer utopia (Ellenberger, 2017), the emergence of public discourses of male homosexuality in Iceland in the 1950s (Benediktsdóttir, 2017b), the history of S78's library (Tómasdóttir, 2017), the biography of the only Icelander to be sentenced for homosexual conduct with consenting adults (Kristinsson, 2017), and my own article on translations of Sappho's poetry and its connections with Icelandic discourses on women's same-sex sexuality (Vilhjálmsson, 2017). That same year, an issue of the humanities journal *Ritið* (2017:2) was dedicated to queer studies and research, containing articles on queer performances in mid-20th century author Elías Mar (Benediktsdóttir, 2017a), a 19th and early 20th century Icelander who troubled the gender binary (S. A. Birgisdóttir, 2017), and the connections between queer theory and psychoanalysis (Bragadóttir, 2017).

Since that constitutive year, queer topics have become much more prominent in Icelandic academia. Studies include Ellenberger, Hafsteinsdóttir and Benediktsdóttir's article on romantic friendship between women in Reykjavík (2019) and their online database of sources on queer Icelandic women before the 1960s (2022). Ellenberger & Hafsteinsdóttir also recently published an article on queer sexualities and genders in Icelandic sources from the 18th and 19th centuries (2022). Benediktsdóttir has been especially prolific. Her PhD-thesis on author Elías Mar and his queer modernism (2019a) was a milestone in Icelandic queer literary studies, as were two articles she subsequently published which drew on the thesis (2020, 2022c). She queered the Icelandic literary canon with an article on Halldór Laxness' *The Great Weaver of Kashmir* (2019b), analysed the entry of the word "homosexuality" into Icelandic discourse in the 20th century (2022b), and studied Sjón's novel *Moonstone* and its queer anti-patriotism (2022a). Finally, Benediktsdóttir and Kjaran published an article on past queer spaces in Reykjavík (2022). Most recently, Linda Sólveigar- og Guðmundsdóttir's anthropological PhD-thesis on queer migrations to Iceland in relation to homonationalism, migrant hierarchies, and the politics of belonging has broken new ground (Sólveigar- og Guðmundsdóttir, 2024). Finally, I should mention my own articles on queer, heterotopic space in late 19th century Reykjavík (Vilhjálmsson, 2018, 2019b, 2020).

One should note that previous work on Icelandic queer history and literature has focused on the 19th and early 20th centuries. More recent queer history and literature remains largely unexplored, with two main exceptions. First, Jens Rydström's treatment of the history of same-sex marriage in Iceland in his comparative book *Odd Couples: A History of Gay Marriage in Scandinavia* (Rydström, 2011). Rydström's account is especially remarkable for introducing the viewpoint of Icelandic LGBTQ+ critique of same-sex marriage as a regulatory institution, a viewpoint which has been kept completely out of Icelandic public discourse. It this way, Rydström's book complicates the progress narrative that has reigned around the topic in Iceland. Secondly, Ellenberger's (2017) previously mentioned chapter on the image of the Icelandic queer utopia shows how Icelanders' representations of themselves, to themselves and others,

have transformed since the 1990s. Moving from a rejection of homosexuality as un-Icelandic and diseased, public discourses now include (some) gay and lesbian Icelanders into the national imaginary and, what is more, use that inclusion in a homonationalist manner (on which, see Section 2.4 below) to strengthen Icelandic nationalism and posit Icelandic superiority over national others. This also has the effect of excluding immigrants from the national imaginary because of their supposed homophobia, a homophobia that so recently was accepted as very Icelandic indeed. What remains to be studied is *how* this happened and *why*.

How best to proceed with such a study? A good tactic is to begin by studying the approaches of other contemporary research projects in queer history, especially in the neighbouring Nordics and the UK. In the Nordics, recent years have seen a great proliferation of research projects into queer history and literature (Nyegaard et al., 2022). "NordiQueer: A Nordic Queer Revolution?", led by Jens Rydström and Tone Hellesund, aims to map Scandinavian queer activism through a transnational approach, producing comparative research between the Scandinavian countries or ignoring their borders altogether. It has produced works such as Peter Edelberg's (2024) article on the intertwined history of Scandinavian LGBTQ+ organizations and Rydström's (2022) chapter on queer content in nominally straight Swedish porn magazines from the 1950s to the 1980s. Rydström had used a similar pan-Nordic approach before in his previously mentioned book, *Odd Couples* (Rydström, 2011). Further, in 2007, Rydström and Kati Mustola edited the anthology *Criminally Queer: Homosexuality and Criminal Law in Scandinavia 1842–1999*, which offered a new, comparative perspective on the legal frameworks regulating homosexuality in the Nordics, including Iceland (Mustola & Rydström, 2007; Þorvaldsdóttir, 2007). Another ongoing border-crossing project is "Cruising the Baltic Sea: Nation, Gender and Sexuality in Pleasure-Based Ferry Traffic between Finland, Åland and Sweden", led by Katarina Mattsson.

Besides these transnational projects, there are a number of others more nationally centred. "Queerdom: Researching Queer Domesticities and Intimacies in Norway 1842–1972", led by Tone Hellesund, shifts the focus of queer historical research from the centre to the margin and from public space to the private, investigating how rural and peripheral Norwegian queer people led their day-to-day lives. Among other works, it has led to the pan-Nordic article collection *Skeiv lokalhistorie: Kulturhistoriske perspektiver på sammekjønnsrelasjoner og kjønnsoverskridelser* (Hundstad et al., 2022). In Denmark, Rikke Andreassen spearheads the "New Histories of Female Same-Sex Relations 1880 to 2020" project, which aims to create new conceptions of queer history through a determined focus on women, troubling the commonly known, male-dominated story of Nordic progress from criminalization to tolerance. It has already resulted in Andreassen's article on an early 20th century lesbian press scandal in Copenhagen and the problem of its interpretation in the present (Andreassen, 2023). In a similar manner, in Finland, Antu Sorainen has led the project "Protolesbian Life History and Nationalist Sentiment in the 1920s–30s Finland", while Tuula Juvonen

leads the "Affective Activism: Sites of Queer and Trans World-Making" project, which aims to investigate the ways in which queer and trans activists claim space in the world. In terms of queer literature, one may point to Jenny Bergenmar's project "The QUEERLIT Database", which aims to create a digital library referencing all Swedish literary texts, past and present, with LGBTQ+ themes (*Queerlit*, n.d.). One may also mention the Norwegian Queer Archive (*Skeivt arkiv*), which collects queer materials in any and all forms at the University Library of Bergen (*Skeivt Arkiv*, n.d.).

Of special note is how recent years have seen a sharp increase in historical interest in HIV/AIDS. This also applies in the Nordics. Jens Rydström's and Lena Lennerhed's project "When the State Won't Do: Aids and Civil Society in Sweden 1982–2000" inspects how civil society and the state interacted in the face of the epidemic in Sweden (Lennerhed & Rydström, 2023). In Denmark, the "Cultural History of AIDS in Denmark" project, led by Michael Nebeling Petersen, looks at AIDS/HIV from a broad perspective and aims to understand its impact on Danish culture as a whole (Petersen et al., 2023, 2024; Petersen & Nielsen, 2023). Ketil Slagstad (2023) has taken a similar, broad view in his recent book on the history of AIDS/HIV in Norway.

Generally, these Nordic research projects tend to emphasize the need to see Nordic queer history and literature on its own terms and to be wary of uncritically adopting the dominant models of LGBTQ+ history emanating from the U.S., the U.K., and (to a lesser extent) Germany. The Nordic queer organizations are some of the oldest in the world and Nordic LGBTQ+ history seems to have followed a path that does not quite fit into the one so often traced from the Oscar Wilde trial through the Stonewall Riots to the outbreak of AIDS in New York and on to the present. This is not to say that that history is not commonly challenged by historians in the countries concerned. Besides the wide-ranging, critical, queer-historical literature referenced in Chapter 2, which tends to be focused on the US, one may point to recent developments in UK queer history. The anthology *Locating Queer Histories: Places and Traces across the UK* goes agains the London-centric grain of much previous British LGBTQ+ history by emphasizing the importance of locality and situation (Bengry et al., 2023). Matt Cook and Alison Oram's *Queer Beyond London* traces similar steps, analysing queer histories from Brighton, Plymouth, Leeds and Manchester (Cook & Oram, 2022). All the while, Justin Bengry has moved the focus onto the historical intersection of homosexuality and consumer capitalism (Bengry, 2015), with a forthcoming book on the history of the "Pink Pound" (Bengry, 2018).

Thus, recent research projects in the Nordics and the UK emphasize locality rather than the metropole, transnationalism rather than methodological nationalism, and domesticities rather than public spectacles. The research project that this PhD-thesis is a part of is in some ways similar and in some ways distinct from these. In 2020, Ellenberger, Benediktsdóttir and Hafsteinsdóttir, who had been very prominent in the turn towards queer theory in the Icelandic humanities, received a grant for a research project called "From Sexual Outlaws to Model Citizens: The Relations between Queer

Sexualities and Nationality in Iceland 1944–2010" which was the first major research project on the history of queer sexualities and queer literature in Iceland. The "Sexual Outlaws" project aimed to examine how queer sexualities were constituted through public (medical, juridical, political, media) and literary (fiction) discourses, paying special attention to representation and regulation and how they correlate with ideas about Icelandic national identity. It posed two main research questions:

> a) How were queer sexualities constituted in relation to nationality through public and literary discourses in 1944–2010?
>
> b) How were they represented and what role did such representations play in the regulation of queer sexualities?

Thus, the research project has a critical view of the nation, viewing it as a constructed concept whose development and regulatory role may be investigated through its shifting relationship with queerness in both literature and society. The project aims to unpack this relationship using three prongs of attack: two historical PhD-projects and one literary-theoretical project. The first is the PhD-project of Hafdís Erla Hafsteinsdóttir, provisionally titled "Foreign Contamination? Construction of Sexual Deviancy in Iceland", focusing on the history of the AIDS epidemic in Iceland in the 1980s and 1990s and how it affected discourses of the nation (Hafsteinsdóttir, forthcoming). The second is the current PhD-thesis, focusing on the rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s and 2000s and its reconstruction of the relationship between queerness and nation. Finally, Ásta Kristín Benediktsdóttir leads the literary investigation into queer Icelandic literature, having already published one article on queerness in the work of author Sjón (Benediktsdóttir, 2024). Thus, the "Sexual Outlaws" project shares a critical view with the Nordic and British research projects already mentioned, emphasizing the local, peripheral peculiarities of the Icelandic setting while being acutely aware of its connections with cultural streams from abroad.

In relation to all the work I have hitherto referenced, my own PhD-project has two main peculiarities. Its timeframe inspects very recent history, while its focus on triangulating queerness, neoliberalism, and the nation is unusual (though it has clear models, especially in Michael Nebeling Petersen's work on queerness in relation to Danish national identity (Petersen, 2011, 2012, 2016)). Indeed, as this review of the extant literature shows, the period in Icelandic queer history which this thesis covers has rarely been researched using critical academic tools and theories, with the previously mentioned exception of Ellenberger's (2017) book chapter and Rydström's treatment of Iceland in his *Odd Couples* (Rydström, 2011); further, the combined frames of the critique of neoliberalism, the critique of the nation, queer theory, memory theory, and affect theory have not previously been used in the context of Icelandic academic history, whether queer or not. Hence, this thesis treads new ground and aims to fill in a gap in Icelandic historical knowledge as well as using an original theoretical frame, so employing an unusual approach in the Nordic context and perhaps offering a new perspective on Nordic queer history more generally.

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

In this section, I will give a brief overview of the structure of the thesis. I will start, in Chapter 2, by reviewing the theoretical basis of the PhD-project. I will review theories of nation and nationalism, neoliberalism, the history of sexuality, queer theory, affect theory, and collective memory theory which I have used in my research and position that research in relation to the theories.

In Chapter 3, I will draw a picture of the background and context of my research, briefly sketching the outlines of the history of the Icelandic national imaginary from the late 19th century onwards. I will review the construction of the figure of the "True Icelander" through the figures of his "other" in nationalist discourses. I will then take on the recent past, reviewing the entry of neoliberalism into Icelandic society in the 1990s and its transformative effects on previous constructions of the nation.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss the methods employed in the research and my position in relation to it. First, I will discuss data collection, before moving on to discuss discourse analysis of said data as employed in the research. I will then discuss the genealogical method employed in Papers II & III before moving on to discuss the ethical considerations confronting this research. I will finish by discussing my perspective and position as a researcher against the research subject.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss each of the four papers making up the core of the thesis, establish the connections between them, and draw out their common thread.

In Chapter 6, I will draw conclusions from the previous discussion of the papers. Thereafter, in the Original Publications section, the four papers will be presented for reading. The thesis has no appendices.

2 Theoretical Framework

I will begin by briefly sketching the fundamentals of my theoretical frame before moving on to a more detailed discussion in the Sections of this chapter. This PhD-thesis is built on a post-structuralist, social-constructionist, and critical theoretical frame. While these terms are multivalent (to say the least), I mean by it an epistemological stance that sees truth as a construction of discourses, not as the underlying reality behind them; that sees subjects and objects as socially constructed and always in relation to each other, not as metaphysical entities that can stand alone; that sees discourses as creators of reality rather than its descriptors; that sees knowledge as situated in social structures and inseparable from power, not as abstracted from the world; that sees history as a discursive creation of the present, not as a reproduction of the past; and that sees nation, gender, sexuality, memory, and emotion as performative social constructs, not as truths of the body or the soul.

Central to this theoretical view is the concept of discourse. I see discourse, through Michel Foucault's work, as a system of (loosely or clearly) related silences and utterances (both textual and spoken) which work in tandem to create real effects in the world (Foucault, 1975, 1976, 1981). Subjects and objects are established as such by occupying the subject and object positions of discourse—the one speaking and the one spoken of or to. Discourses create and reproduce norms, establish "truth", and thus, constitute power and knowledge.

I see this process through Judith Butler's theory of performativity. In order to move through the world, subjects must establish their relationship to discursive norms through endlessly repeated citations of them. It is through this performative, imitative iteration that subjects become recognizable as such (Butler, 1990, 1993). In this way, subjects are incentivized to internalize discourses and reproduce them. They adopt and create narratives involving themselves, stories that take tangled, chaotic, and paradoxical events and reorder them into linear progressions with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Through these narratives, the subject becomes intelligible to others and to themselves as possessing a stable (sexual, gender, national) identity; they become plotted within history and memory, so connecting with collectivities seen as sharing that history and that memory. This identification is emotional, deep-seated, and very real: to suggest that it is constructed and performative is not to suggest that it is fake or easily changed—quite the contrary. However, importantly, it is not fixed and immutable, and so, change becomes possible, especially when aided by critique.

This view sees the subject as always already embedded in structures of power, which I see, through Foucault, as a relational force (Foucault, 1982, 2001): something that is

not *held* by anybody, as property, but something relating subjects to one another and subordinating the one to the other. However, in that relationship, the subordinated is still a *part* of the power relation rather than simply its inert object; they can offer resistance to power in a myriad ways. Power, then, cannot be unilateral and simplistic; it is always complex, embedded in history, and vulnerable to critique. The purpose of such critiques of power—of which this PhD-thesis is one—is not to establish who has power over whom, but rather to analyse how power *works* in a certain time and place, what it *does* in, and to, the world. In what follows, I will explore this general theoretical view as regards the nation, neoliberalism, sexuality, queerness, history, memory, and emotion, using the work of theorists of those respective fields. I will start with the nation.

2.1 Nation and Nationalism

When the Icelandic state started to engage with the lesbian and gay community in the mid-1990s, there was a refrain running through their dialogue: the issue of nationality. In a 1994 parliament report on the status of Icelandic gays and lesbians, representatives of S78 insisted that they were, in effect, not Icelanders at all; they were "sexual-political refugees" from their country, living in "exile" in large cities on the continent with gay and lesbian scenes—especially Copenhagen, which "has for centuries been a kind of capital for lesbian and gay Icelanders". Thus, they were, in effect, Danish subjects who had been left behind by Iceland's struggle for independence from Denmark. The nation, they implied, needed to put this right: to include them, to claim them from Denmark, and thus complete the project of national independence at last (Paper I, p. 216).

This shows well how important the relationship between LGBTQ+ people and the nation was my research period. But what was it exactly that Icelandic gays and lesbians were "refugees" *from*? What was this nation that they wanted to join? In Icelandic public discourse, one most frequently finds an idea of the nation derived from the late 18th and early 19th century nationalists Herder and Fichte: the nation as a direct expression of the common racial, linguistic, and religious characteristics of a mass of people confined to a single territory—a mystical union of a people related by blood, custom, and land (Hálfdanarson, 2001). The shortcomings of such definitions, however, have been clear at least since Renan's famous 1882 lecture *What is a Nation?* As Renan demonstrates, there is a plethora of commonly accepted "nations" that do not meet these criteria, yet this is not felt to diminish their claim to nationhood (Renan, 1882).

The modern academic debate on nations and nationalism took off in the 1960s, with its epicentre in Britain (Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, pp. 3–13). Broadly, the debate has been divided into two main camps, the "primordialist" and the "modernist". The former sees nations as arising from already existing familial, ethnic, or tribal structures or from shared myths, symbols, and traditions; so, the primordialists maintain that

nations have real roots in the deep past (see. e.g., Gat & Yakobson, 2013; Geertz, 1963). The latter, by contrast, sees nations as relatively recent inventions, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, and as products of nationalism rather than its cause (see, e.g., Gellner, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1992). Neither of these models, however, seems ideal to explain the *dynamism* of the nation, its ability to morph and shift to include and exclude groups of people from one historical moment to the next.

Benedict Anderson's treatment of the nation in his book *Imagined Communities* (2006 [1983]) seems to offer a more dynamic model of the inclusionary/exclusionary capability of the nation. Anderson famously defined it as an "imagined political community", imagined "as both inherently limited" (rather than universal) "and sovereign" (rather than subject to a monarch). Its origin in the imagination is evident from the fact that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion": they each see themselves as sharing "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006, pp. 6–7). Thus, the nation is "conceived in language, not in blood" and so, its definition is volatile; one could be "invited into" (and, presumably, disinvited from) the imagined community under the influence of discourses and disciplines, maps and censuses, museums and statistics, memory and forgetting (Anderson, 2006, p. 145).

Yet despite its volatility and its imaginary nature, the nation is not a fabrication or a falsity for Anderson. The nation, instead, belongs to the *creative* realm and as such is very real, as evidenced by the fact that "over the past two centuries … many millions of people" were willing "not so much to kill, as … to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson, 2006, pp. 6–7). The nation performatively creates the "national" reality that it purports to describe: imagination inscribes itself on the world. Thus, it is able to accommodate a variety of inclusions/exclusions and yet continue to see itself as essentially unchanged.

The character of the included has tended to be that of a follower of a set of "national" norms. In his 1985 book, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe,* George L. Mosse argued that, as the middle class ascended and assumed power in the new European nation-states of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Western nation became imagined through a middle-class notion of "respectability" in social life—especially in terms of sex. The ideal national subject was seen as living a reproductive, patriarchal, domestic, family life, where sexual activity was consigned to the privacy of the home and regulated by marriage (Mosse, 1985). Deviants from that model—the masturbating youth, the shameless libertine, the seductive homosexual, the decadent lesbian—were seen as national others and became objects of nationalistic moral panics. They were felt to threaten the purity, the respectability, and the very future of the nation (Benediktsdóttir, 2017b; Conrad, 2004; Hafsteinsdóttir, 2017b; Heede, 2005; Juvonen, 2006; Mosse, 1996; Tamagne, 2003).

However, in the last few decades, there has been an abrupt shift towards the acceptance of some LGBTQ+ people as parts of Western nations. As I shall detail below, queer theorists and scholars argue that such inclusions should not be taken at face value, but rather as a new manifestation of the regulation of queer sexualities that had previously taken the form of national or social exclusion (Bachetta & Haritaworn, 2011; Haritaworn, 2015; Jungar & Peltonen, 2016; Klapeer, 2017; Laskar, 2014; Petersen, 2011, 2012; Petersen et al., 2017; Puar, 2017). Yet despite this argument for the continuity of regulation, the radical changes in its methodology require historical explanation. What caused this shift in the national imaginary, starting in the 1990s, that re-imagined the nation to include the previously deviant figures of the gay man and the lesbian? A range of queer scholars have argued that the shift may be traced to the rise of neoliberalism and its subtle but strong effect on the imaginary of the nation (Duggan, 2003; Eng, 2010; Puar, 2017). Thus, it is to neoliberalism that I will turn next.

2.2 Neoliberalism

Michel Foucault was one of the first academics to look critically at neoliberalism. In his 1978–1979 lectures at the Collège de France, released three decades later under the title *Naissance de la biopolitique* or *The Birth of Biopolitics,* Foucault noted the rising popularity of the ideology in right-wing economics and political theory circles, shortly before it became ascendant on the world stage with the 1980s governments of Thatcher and Reagan. Tracing the emergence of the ideology to the radical economic rethinking of post-1945 West Germany, Foucault characterized it as aiming at modelling "the overall exercise of political power … on the principles of a market economy", i.e., "taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them on to a general art of government" (Foucault, 2008, p. 131).

This differed from classical liberalism especially in how neoliberal ideologues saw the role of the state. Far from *laissez-faire*, the state was to be "active, vigilant, and intervening in a liberal regime" to ensure competition and the dominance of the free market (Foucault, 2008, p. 133). Government, however,

> must not intervene on effects of the market. Nor must neoliberalism … correct the destructive effects of the market on society [nor] form a counterpoint or a screen … between society and economic processes. It has to intervene on society as such, in its fabric and depth. Basically, it has to intervene on society so that competitive mechanisms can play a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society and by intervening in this way its objective will become possible, that is to say, a general regulation of society by the market (Foucault, 2008, p. 145).

This involved far more than the stereotypical characteristics of neoliberal governments, such as the privatization of public utilities and the deregulation of business and finance.

Even more importantly, it entailed the slow encroachment of neoliberal logic into every facet of social life, where "what is sought is … a society subject to the dynamic of competition … an enterprise society", a society "that is not orientated towards the commodity and the uniformity of the commodity [as in classical liberalism], but towards the multiplicity and differentiation of enterprises" (Foucault, 2008, pp. 147–149). In this way, the rise of neoliberalism affected every part of human society—sexuality, the nation, memory, emotion.

For Foucault, the basis of the new, neoliberal social order was the concept of "human capital", through which neoliberals saw labour. In their view, labour was not an abstract thing—the labour power of a worker, exploited by the capitalist, indistinguishable from the labour power of other workers of the same class. Instead, neoliberals saw each worker as earning their wages on the basis of their skills, which belonged to each individually, not abstractable from their own persons. These skills, developed through experience or education, became each worker's "human capital" which they could exploit and manage in order to increase their "earnings stream" (Foucault, 2008, pp. 223–224). This meant that the workers were constructed, through neoliberal discourses, as participating in the economy in essentially the same way as the old capitalist class: through the management of their human capital on a competitive market.

This has a levelling effect, in which each and every person participating in the economy becomes a *homo oeconomicus*, which did not merely imply the rational "partner of exchange" of classical liberalism; the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* is an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" and by his consumption producing "his own satisfaction". The state, then, sees it as its goal to "improve human capital" and "to preserve and employ it for as long as possible"; indeed, "all the problems of health care and public hygiene must … be rethought as elements which may or may not improve human capital". Foucault's term for such technologies of governing and managing human life to maximize productive and consumptive capability was "biopolitics" (fr. *biopolitique*) (Foucault, 2008, pp. 226–230). Biopolitics, Foucault argued, has become the predominant modern form of power/knowledge, the exercise of which "consists in guiding the possibility of conduct [*conduire les conduits*] and putting in order the possible outcome [*aménager la probabilité*]", so "structur[ing] the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 1982, pp. 789–790, French text: 1994, p. 237). This is the essence of what Foucault referred to as neoliberal *governmentality* (fr. *gouvernmentalité*) (Foucault, 2007, pp. 108–109).

For the subject of neoliberal government, this "conduct of conduct" becomes internalized, through neoliberal discourses, as a new form of subjectivity. Thus, neoliberalism "works by installing in society a concept of human subject as autonomous, individualized, self-directing decisionmaking agent who becomes an

entrepreneur of one self; a human capital". This "autonomization" of the subject entails that any social or structural problems should be solved at the level of the individual: each subject should assume personal responsibility for their ills and remove them through self-care—a process called "responsibilization" (Chandler & Reid, 2016; Türken et al., 2016, p. 33). Thus, one's happiness becomes one's own responsibility, which reflects not only on one's own personal well-being, but also on the happiness and success of the collectivities one belongs to, such as the nation (Cabanas & Illouz, 2019). This way of viewing the world is performative: after its installation, it becomes understood as a fundamental fact of life, describing reality rather than creating it (Rose, 1999a, 1999b). Hence, neoliberalism creates a new way of seeing the world, both from the top-down (governmentality) and the bottom-up (subjectivity).

This deeply affects all aspects of the topic of this PhD-thesis, notably the imaginary of the nation and conceptions of sexuality and queerness. In terms of the nation, as Laurent Berlant argues, "the [neoliberal] right's attempt to shrink domestic government and thereby to hack away at the hyphen between the nation and the state has required the development of new technologies of patriotism that keep the nation at the centre of the public's identification while shrinking the field of what can be expected from the state" (Berlant, 1998, p. 174). Thus, the imaginary of the nation-state shifts and changes when it intersects with neoliberalism. Previously excluded groups may enter the nation through "new technologies of patriotism" if they meet the conditions laid down by neoliberal ideology. From the top-down, neoliberal governmentality may see it as its biopolitical goal to improve the human capital of groups which pre-neoliberal government had excluded on traditional, moral grounds; from the bottom-up, a subject previously excluded on those grounds may see themselves, through neoliberal subjectivity, as possessing the same claim to inclusion as everyone else through their human capital. Through performative discourses, these shifts then become reality.

In terms of sexuality and queerness, neoliberalism also has a powerful effect; as an "especially dense transfer point for relations of power", as Foucault characterized it, sexuality may be one of the most important aspects of humanity to be affected by neoliberalism (Foucault, 1978, p. 103). Indeed, sexuality has long been recognized as inextricably bound to economic relations. As John D'Emilio argued in his groundbreaking 1983 article "Capitalism and Gay Identity", the modern social phenomenon of homosexuality may be seen as a product of capitalism. As it transformed labour relations and detached production from the family unit, it allowed individuals to seek and find new kinds of same-sex relationships in "other" spaces outside of the family home, especially in the industrial cities (D'Emilio, 1983). Just as capitalism created a new form of same-sex relationships, then, neoliberalism must have done the same.

Thus, in Paper I, I analyse how neoliberalism affects the memories of and stories told about Icelandic LGBTQ+ acceptance. In Paper II, I analyse how neoliberal

governmentality and subjectivity met up in the debate over marriage equality. This led Icelandic gays and lesbians to associate their rights struggle with the neoliberalized institution of marriage, while the neoliberal state came to favour their demands for marriage equality over the traditional authority possessed by the National Church. In Paper III, neoliberalism forms the subtext to the theme of exploring the effect of the emotion of joy as it has been used by Icelandic LGBTQ+ activists in their rights struggle, a tactic that carries a strong hint of neoliberal ideas about happiness. In Paper IV, neoliberal subjectivity, responsibilization, and autonomization is front and centre in its concern with the tropes through which Icelandic gay men represented themselves as model national citizens in the media.

However, there is a need to reflect on the applicability of neoliberalism as an analytical frame for the more recent data I use in the papers. Since 2016, the rise of the far-right in the West has seen the political tide turn towards protectionism, the abandonment of free trade organizations, social conservatism, traditionalism, welfare chauvinism, state racism, and increased arms and military spending. This has entailed higher state expenditures, restrictions on free movement, and increased legal and state interference in both markets and social life. All this has prompted the question whether neoliberalism is indeed the all-encompassing "art of government" that it was, or if it went into a death-spiral with the 2008 financial crash and is now being replaced with something new and as yet unnamed.

In 2019, Wendy Brown published a book called *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*, which dealt with this question head-on. In it, she re-evaluates her previous, Foucault-inspired book on the matter from 2015, *Undoing the Demos,* "where my characterization of neoliberalism's world-making rationality focused exclusively on its drive to economize all features of existence, from democratic institutions to subjectivity". This, however, "failed to grasp crucial features of the Thatcher-Reagan neoliberal revolution" which "aimed at releasing markets *and* morals to govern and discipline individuals" (2019, pp. 10–11). Brown's re-evaluation of her thesis may be referred back to her treatment in *Undoing the Demos* of Thatcher's famous quote: "There is no such thing as society. There are only individual men and women". In *Undoing the Demos,* Brown noted that Thatcher's words were followed by a somewhat stumbling addition, seldom quoted: "...and their families". In 2015, Brown had noted the ideological incongruity found in the full quote. Families point the way to society; if there are only individual men and women, then their connections to one another through family ties are merely based on their interests, inevitably weakening and downgrading the institution of the family (2015, pp. 100–107).

In *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism,* Brown reassesses this incongruity and takes it seriously as an important part of the neoliberal project. She now argued that "neoliberal reason ... casts markets and morals as singular forms of human need provision". Both, according to neoliberal ideologists such as Friedrich Hayek, appeared naturally among

human beings without states or sovereigns imposing them; they generated „spontaneous order and evolution" and were "transmitted through tradition, rather than political power" (2019, p. 12). Thus, neoliberals believed that both markets and morals needed protection from the political:

> More than a project of enlarging the sphere of market competition and valuation ('economizing everything' as I argued in *Undoing the Demos*), Hayekian neoliberalism is a moral-political project that aims to protect traditional hierarchies by negating the very idea of the social and radically restricting the reach of democratic political power in nation-states (2019, p. 12).

Yet these two foundation stones of neoliberalism—markets and morals—were misshapen and the house built on them unstable. Neoliberals had aimed to disintegrate society but had only managed to leave it "without common civil norms or commitments". Indeed, "markets and morals twisted as they were submitted to the grammars and spirit of one another—that is, as morality was marketized and markets were moralized". This led to a revanchism on behalf of "traditional values unbound from tradition"; the traditional family, for example, could be valorised at the same time as the figure of a philandering, often-divorced politician was championed; Christianity was extolled while practices of Christian charity were regarded with spite; the nation was held up as a sacred ideal while cultural consumption became ever more globalized; and so on. While paradoxical and illogical, this was a result of the contradictions inherent in neoliberal ideology and not, Brown argued, a new development separate from neoliberalism (2019, pp. 19, 122).

Thus, one must try to analyse these "new formations of subjectivity and politics" of the post-2008-financial-crash world in the light of neoliberalism, even as they counteract and contradict the logic of the "marketization" and "economization" of everything. One should try to "grasp what the forces are that neoliberalism accidentally intersects or instigates and thus what it produces inadvertently and even against its own aims"; one must search for "genealogical emergences … occluded by historiographies bound to progress, regression, dialectics, or determinism" (Brown, 2019, pp. 182–184). By "genealogical emergences", Brown points back to Foucault's works and methodology in order to understand the many facets of neoliberalism in the present. I will likewise now turn to Foucault and his genealogical project, the history of sexuality.

2.3 The History of Sexuality

The field of the history of sexuality originates from Foucault's late works of the 1970s and 1980s, marking the end of his long theoretical engagement with the discipline of history. In the 1960s, Foucault had introduced a new methodology of historical analysis: Foucauldian archaeology (fr. *archéologie*). Archaeology aimed to identify, analyse, and

describe paradigm shifts in systems of thought (fr. *epistèmes*). It focused on how these systems bounded and marked the possibility of theory and practice in a given era and so produced distinctive forms of knowledge and power. Armed with this methodology, Foucault undertook his famous critiques of the asylum, the clinic, and the human sciences (Foucault, 1963, 1966, 1972). Foucault's theorization of neoliberalism may also be seen as belonging to this mode of analysis. However, archaeology left to one side the issue of *causality*, the question of how and why one system of thought succeeded another (T'Jampens & Versieren, 2020).

To adjust for this, Foucault developed a new, Nietzschean historical methodology called genealogy (fr. *généalogie),* which is both a theoretical and a methodological inspiration for this PhD-thesis. Genealogy is a "history of the present" which aims to upset and disturb present certainties and givens through an analysis of the emergence and development of the discourses underpinning them. These could reveal the contingency, the paradox, and the illogicality of the present, its discourses, and its power/knowledge, so opening the door to possibilities of change (Foucault, 1977; Garland, 2014; T'Jampens & Versieren, 2020). As Foucault put it, "the purpose of [genealogical] history is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence [but] to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (Foucault, 1977, p. 16). Thus, genealogy sets itself up against linear progress narratives, national myths, and comforting truths, instead focusing on complications, strange events, and incidents.

Most importantly for this PhD-thesis, Foucault used this genealogical method on the concept of sexuality in the first volume of his series The History of Sexuality (fr. *Histoire de la sexualité*), entitled *The Will to Knowledge* (fr. *La Volonté de savoir*) (Foucault, 1976). *The Will to Knowledge* was to prove enormously influential. In it, Foucault started by describing "the repressive hypothesis", i.e., the popular, modern given that every human being "has" a certain "sexuality" which, throughout history, but especially in the Victorian era, had been repressed by the powers that be. Now, in the modern world, sexuality was attempting to break out of its bounds, becoming ever freer. Foucault showed how absurd this hypothesis was: in fact, during the period of supposed repression, there was an explosion of discourse about sex and sexuality, a stunning proliferation of texts about sex—pornography, court records on sex crimes, pamphlets on sexual health, reports on sexual hygiene, statistics on sex and reproduction, and so on. Far from silence, one found a massive incitement to discourse, the steep rise of the idea that one could only (and indeed, one must) speak the truth about oneself through the concept of one's "sexuality" (Foucault, 1976).

Foucault then traced the emergence of this discursive explosion to the birth of the disciplines of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and sexology in the mid-to-late 19th century. Most famously, he located in 1870 the "birth" of the homosexual "as a species" through the new sciences, but also made clear that this was but one strand of a wider

emergence of the notion of sexuality as stating the ultimate "truth" of the body, not only of the deviant, but of the "normal" too, and indeed, this formulation came to redefine what was "normal" (Foucault, 1978, p. 43). Thus, Foucault de-naturalized and historicized the concept of "sexuality" and indeed, that of "sex" itself (which was but an "ideal point made necessary by the deployment of sexuality and its operation") (Foucault, 1978, p. 155). Both were products of discourses and of power/knowledge; both produced subjects and engendered resistances from those same subjects; and both had a history that could be traced. Thus, "we must not refer a history of sexuality to the agency of sex; but rather show how "sex" is historically subordinate to sexuality", that "very real historical phenomenon", that "especially dense transfer point for relations of power" (Foucault, 1978, pp. 103, 157).

So, Foucault's history of sexuality, as a method, consists in researching the discourses and power-relations regulating bodies and pleasures in the past in order to *de-fatalize* the present and to make change possible. Such history must constantly relate its findings to the present and always be aware of the constructed, historicized nature of the concepts and categories it researches and, indeed, of its own conclusions. This is also the aim of the current PhD-project. Papers II & III make use of Foucault's genealogical methodology (see Section 4.3 below), but in all the papers, the theoretical viewpoint of seeing sexuality and sex as constructed and historically embedded prevails.

Foucault's history of sexuality project has also met with critque. Sociologist Jeffrey Weeks has criticized it as contributing to a "continuist" narrative which "minimize[s] the host of social, legislative and cultural changes that have dismantled the traditional moral order in many parts of the world, and the real changes that individuals have been able to make in their everyday lives" (Weeks, 2000, pp. 7–8). Further, many of Foucault's successors in the field of the history of sexuality, inspired by his genealogy of the homosexual "species", have focused on the history of modern sexual identities, above all homosexuality (see, e.g., Halperin, 1990, 2002; Traub, 2002). This has provoked the critique that many, or even most, works within the history of sexuality "protest too much", being more accurately described as belonging to a "history of homosexuality". Thus, Foucauldian history of sexuality has been criticized for downplaying individual agency in achieving change and for contributing to "homonormativity" in Stryker's sense, i.e., the foregrounding of (male) homosexuality to the detriment of other queer groups (Doan, 2013, p. 13; Stryker, 2008).

This PhD-thesis may be open to similar critique. On the Foucauldian model, it sees subjects as always already enmeshed in power structures and so, it is sceptical of liberationist, progressivist narratives. Its data is also skewed towards discourses from and about gays and lesbians rather than other queer groups. As for the latter critique, as already mentioned in Section 1.1, I see it as my objective to reveal the structures of power *behind* the homonormativity found in the data, hopefully opening up the

possibility for very different, non-homonormative research and activism in the future. As for the first critique, Foucault stated in 1978 that his research "rests on a postulate of absolute optimism", for

> those who are enmeshed, involved, in these power relations can, in their actions, their resistance, their rebellion, escape them, transform them, in a word, cease being submissive … I think there are a thousand things that can be done, invented, contrived by those who, recognizing the relations of power in which they are involved, have decided to resist them or to escape them … Everything I do is done with the conviction that it may be of use (Foucault, 2001, pp. 294–295).

Thus, for Foucault, revealing the subtlety and the extent of power/knowledge should not have a deadening effect on the possibility of resistance; however, it does require a change in how the act of resistance is perceived. In Nikolas Rose's words, the "points at which the citizen has to play his or her part in the games that govern him" are also the points "at which citizens are able to refuse, contest, challenge those demands that are placed upon them" (Rose, 1999a, p. xxiii). Thus, power breeds its own limits; by necessity, opportunities for resistance are as ubiquitous as the power-relations themselves. The history of sexuality is indeed continuist in that power is seen as continuist, but so is resistance to it; to reveal structures of power is also to reveal ways to challenge them, and it is in this spirit that I employ the basis of the history of sexuality in this PhD-thesis.

As we have seen, the most important critiques of the history of sexuality, along with many of its most interesting uses, have come from practitioners of queer theory. I shall turn to this field of study next.

2.4 Queer Theory

In the 1970s, gay and lesbian activists with a scholarly bent started to make inroads into the universities in the U.S. They founded the discipline of lesbian and gay studies which, in the 1980s, started to seek theoretical inspiration in adjacent fields. As already mentioned, in 1983, John D'Emilio used Marxist theory to trace the emergence of the categories of hetero- and homosexuality to the rise of capitalism, industry, and urbanization in an influential article (D'Emilio, 1983); the year after, Gayle Rubin, making use of feminist theory, proposed a field of study analysing sexuality as a "vector of oppression", comparable to gender (Rubin, 2020 [1984]). Foucault's first volume of The History of Sexuality series was also influencing scholars with its radical rethinking of the concept of sexuality and sex itself. These theoretical developments took on a greater urgency in the shadow of the AIDS/HIV epidemic and the sometimes panicked, sometimes coldly indifferent, sometimes harshly repressive responses to it by Western governments, particularly in the U.S.

In particular, Foucault's argument for the constructed nature of "sex"—in all the meanings of the word—proved influential on the emerging discipline of gender studies in the U.S. Judith Butler's seminal works of the 1990s, such as *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (Butler, 1990, 1993), argue that gender should be seen and understood through the linguistics theories of J.L. Austin, especially his description of "performative speech acts": words that, in their utterance, *do* something, perform something, inscribe something in the world. In daily life, people constantly imitate and repeat gendered acts and utterances and so perform their gender and show it to others; as this performance is endlessly reproduced, it becomes naturalized in discourse as one's "sex", the innermost truth of one's being. Thus, Butler saw gender, in a Foucauldian manner, as a "regime of truth" that created the effect it was held to describe (Jagger, 2008).

Butler's theories sparked a wide academic debate. By historicizing and de-naturalizing both gender and sexuality, Foucault and Butler both begged the question of what sexual and gender identities meant, on what they were based, what their history was (and how old they were), and so, how categories such as "lesbian" and "gay" could meaningfully be made the objects of study, as if they were stable and essential, able to be captured in text. In influential writings from the 1990s, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990, 1993) rose to the challenge and argued that, while the hetero- and homosexual dichotomy was wholly unsatisfactory to explain or analyse human desires, whether in the present or the past, there was indeed a useful, if unstable, category to be found in *queerness* and *queer people*, who, she argued, shared the constitutive experience of shame, imposed on them by heteronormativity and what Adrienne Rich (1980) referred to as "compulsory heterosexuality", even more rigidly enforced during the AIDS epidemic. Thus, the word *queer,* which had long been used as a term of opprobrium for people who deviated from gendered and sexual norms, was reclaimed by queer theorists in the hope that its wide application and lack of clear definition would allow them to escape the strictures of modern identity categories. This purposefully non-identitarian queerness might, Sedgwick suggested, be a better object of critical study than subjects whom the researcher unilaterally defines as "gays" or "lesbians" and thus imposes on them a categorization sometimes foreign to them. If queerness could be seen as "*whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant", as David Halperin (1995, p. 62, emphasis his) defined the term, this opened queer theory up and created a much wider field of study.

At the same time as these theoretical developments were taking place, in the 1990s and early 2000s, the status of lesbians and gays in the West was changing. Gay and lesbian representation became ever more common in mainstream media (Streitmatter, 2009); homophobic laws were liberalized and limited marriage rights gained, with Denmark leading the way in 1989 and the Netherlands and the rest of the Nordics soon following suit (Petersen, 2011; Rydström, 2011). Gender and queer theorists met this

development with suspicion. As Butler wrote: "To be legitimated by the state is to enter the terms of legitimation offered there, and to find that one's public and recognizable sense of personhood is fundamentally dependent on the lexicon of that legitimation" (2002, p. 17). Michael Warner similarly warned that "gay marriage" was contributing to a growing discursive split. Increasingly, gays and lesbians were being accepted and legitimated into national imaginaries through marriage, but "the image of the good gay is never invoked without its shadow in mind—the bad queer, the kind who has sex, who talks about it, and who builds with other queers a way of life that ordinary folk do not understand or control" (1999, p. 131). Marriage, Warner argued, was exclusionary as well as inclusionary, even though it may well be regarded as a strategic goal, as Butler (2002) argued.

Lisa Duggan criticized this process of inclusion and state legitimation in her 2003 book *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. She used the term *homonormativity* to describe the process, which she defined as "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them" by promoting "a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan, 2003, p. 50). Homonormativity, for Duggan, was a product of neoliberalism and its drive to change subjects into market actors in all aspects of their life, while marriage was an especially powerful regulatory tool of neoliberalism. In neoliberal terms, marriage is essentially a merger contract between two market actors and their capital (Marzullo, 2011); yet this is not merely an economic matter, but also an essential part of what neoliberal ideologues consider to be the naturally arising, traditional morality which must be promoted and protected by neoliberal government (Brown, 2019; see Section 2.2 above). Thus, the neoliberal view of marriage opens it up to *any* couples, no matter their gender identities or sexual orientations, insofar it is merely a merger of two capital portfolios; however, the marriage institution must also retain its traditional social values of domesticity, respectability, and reproduction, insofar as neoliberalism considers these natural, necessary, and in need of protection. Thus, "gay marriage", as it became called in the U.S., performed a vital neoliberal regulatory function in the field of both markets and morals (Duggan, 2003).

However, the very term "gay marriage" shows up a problem. Under full marriage equality, which has existed in Iceland since 2010, any two individuals can marry, while the term "gay marriage" seems to exclude all the letters of the LGBTQ+ acronym except two (or even one). As already mentioned, Susan Stryker provided an important critique of this tendency of reducing LGBTQ+ to G in a 2008 article, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity". Stryker pointed out that there was another meaning of the word "homonormativity" in use in trans communities, where it referred to the unspoken norm of (male) homosexuality's predominance in queer activist work, history, and theory. Stryker suggested expanding Duggan's term to incorporate this critique, so enlarging the concept from the "macropolitical manifestations" of

accommodations to neoliberalism to the "micropolitical level," focusing on how gay interests become aligned "with dominant constructions of knowledge and power" while "displac[ing] modes of embodiment calling into question the basis of authority from which normative voices speak" (Stryker, 2008, p. 155). Thus, she echoed Foucault's call to attend to the "micro-physics of power" regulating the smallest movement of the body of the subject as well as the larger structures constraining it (Foucault, 1975, pp. 34–36).

This is a critique I have tried to follow in my own use of the term "homonormativity", which appears in every paper of this thesis. In Paper I, I use the term to analyse the new strategies adopted by S78 in the 1990s, which openly aimed at "normalization" and social respectability by, among other things, excluding bisexual people (p. 214). In Paper II, I use it extensively to critique marriage equality in Iceland as a neoliberal regulatory tool discursively (though not legally) excluding all non-homosexual queer groups. In Papers III & IV, homonormativity is used to analyse the exclusion of non-joyous queer people from the Reykjavík Pride Parade, also known as the "March of Joy".

In the 2000s, homonormativity became increasingly entangled with nationalism in the West. In her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times,* Jasbir Puar (2017) named this new hybrid *homonormative nationalism* or *homonationalism* for short: the emergence of discourses presenting the homonormative inclusion of some queer people into the national imaginary as a sign of national progress and superiority over others. Puar focused on this process in the U.S., where, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, a variety of discourses emerged which contrasted the civilized, progressive, white, LGBTQ+-inclusive West with the barbarous, backwards, dark-skinned, homophobic Muslim world. Thus, LGBTQ+ inclusions became a discursive tool for legitimating U.S. imperialism and white supremacy.

This idea of superiority, Puar argues, rests on previously extant discourses of *sexual exceptionalism*, i.e., the discursive construction of U.S. citizens' extraordinary freedom in sexual matters, which, through homonationalism, is extended to encompass both its normative heterosexual and its homonormative LGBTQ+ citizens, the latter validating and strengthening the privileges of the former. Through the same process, non-normative others are pushed to the margins of the nation and beyond, making such figures as the brown, Middle Eastern, young, male "terrorist" into a queer, phobic object. This process was most dramatically displayed by the sexual humiliations, rapes, and tortures committed on such bodies by U.S. soldiers in Abu Ghraib prison during the occupation of Iraq. This, Puar argues, creates a dichotomy in the ways that queerness appears in the contemporary West. On the one hand, queerness functions as a biopolitical *regulatory regime*, privileging some queer subjects (white, usually gay and lesbian, able-bodied, neoliberal, consuming citizens) who are increasingly protected by the biopolitical state and associated with life; on the other, queerness

appears as a "queered darkening", or radical othering, of racialized bodies pushed out of the frame of life through a homonationalist "necropolitics" which associates them with death and dereliction (Mbembe, 2003; Puar, 2017, p. xxi).

While Puar's analysis is focused on the U.S. and the context of the "War on Terror", her concept of homonationalism has since been applied to other Western contexts different from the U.S., such as the Nordic welfare states (Ellenberger, 2017; Jungar & Peltonen, 2016; Petersen, 2011, 2016). While such expansions of the term from its original context have been met with critique (Winer & Bolzendahl, 2021), the Nordics do indeed possess a counterpart to U.S. sexual exceptionalism: *Nordic exceptionalism*. This is a discourse representing the Nordic nation-states of Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland as exemplary in the world because of their unique history of egalitarianism, feminism, anti-racism, tolerance, prosperity, and happiness (Bjerring-Hansen et al., 2021; Jensen & Loftsdóttir, 2022). Picking up on this note, Nordic homonationalism (which, of course, takes its own form in each national context) posits the Nordics as especially tolerant, protective, and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people; any homophobia found there is displaced unto national others, especially immigrants, who are excluded through association with homophobic, un-Nordic backwardness. In Scandinavia, the immigrant group most singled out in this regard are people of colour of Arabic and Middle Eastern origin (Bissenbakker & Myong, 2019; Jungar & Peltonen, 2016; Klapeer, 2017; Petersen, 2016). In Iceland, given the small size of that particular immigrant group, the national other excluded by homonationalism has tended to consist of Eastern Europeans (Sólveigar- og Guðmundsdóttir, 2023, 2024; Sólveigar- og Guðmundsdóttir & Skaptadóttir, 2017).

I have used Puar's homonationalism as an analytical frame in three of the papers of this thesis. In Paper II, I analyse, through a homonationalist lens, discourses presenting Iceland as competing in an international race for marriage equality, where the national team demands unanimous support from the nation, so associating marriage equality with nationality. In Paper III, discourses on Icelandic LGBTQ+ joy are seen, through homonationalism, as representing Iceland as superior to other, backward, homophobic countries, which also functions to denigrate immigrants in Iceland as lacking this characteristic, Icelandic, progressive joy. In Paper IV, a homonationalist discursive formation is analysed in which Icelandic gay men consolidate their entry into the nation through championing the superiority of Icelandic tolerance over foreign homophobia. Thus, homonationalism shows, with great clarity, how the history of the Icelandic LGBTQ+ rights struggle is deeply implicated within existing power structures of nationality and neoliberalism.

However, the theorists so far treated have also indicated a problem at the heart of queer theory: the exact meaning and utility of term "queer" itself. Puar split queerness into a biopolitical, regulated, identity-bound form on the one hand and a necropolitical, fluid, abjected form on the other. Warner distinguished between the married and

respectable "good gay" and the promiscuous, radical "bad queer". Duggan's homonormativity implies an opposing abnormal queerness. What, then, is the titular research object of queer theory in the West today? What is queer in homonormative, homonationalist, Western societies? Who can be called queer and who cannot? If queerness is "*whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant", to quote Halperin again (1995, p. 62, emphasis his), the question is whether the object is sufficiently "at odds" and whether the things it is at odds with are indeed normal, legitimate, and dominant. Halperin's definition frees queerness from many constraints (such as being taken as merely a metonym for LGBTQ+), but instead, it seems to fix "normality" fast in its stead. Reading "the queer" requires an understanding of "the normal", an understanding that seems questionable given the complexity of any discourses of norm and normality in any society.

Eng, Halberstam & Muñoz have suggested taking "queer" as "a political metaphor without a fixed referent", meaning that queer studies becomes a field of "subjectless critique" (Eng et al., 2005, pp. 1–3). Thus, a queer field of critique comes into being which Petersen defines as "*a range of deconstructive and critical questions put to givens which we do not normally think to question, with the goal of showing up and problematizing the ways in which the normal establishes itself as normal through delimiting and pointing out the Other as pathological, perverse, undesirable, or simply queer*" (2012, p. 98, emphasis in the original). Thus, queer becomes a purposefully open question put to anything taken for granted as normal and unquestioned in the world. This open way of seeing queerness, however, creates a special challenge for studies like this PhD-thesis, which is in the field of queer history. How can *historical* research work without a subject or a fixed referent? Traditional historical methods of inquiry are so distant from such a theoretical frame that some queer theorists have dismissed the field as unable to deal seriously with the question of queerness in the past (Doan, 2013, pp. 7–13). This critique has called for a rethinking of what "queer history" means, and it is to that field I will turn next.

2.5 Queer History

When it comes to the theoretical grounding of queer history, I am above all inspired by historian Laura Doan's book *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality and Women's Experience of Modern War* (2013). In the book, Doan surveys the fields of queer history and the history of sexuality and weighs them up against the charges of its queer-theoretical critics. While defending history from the most sweeping attacks on it, accusing its critics of stereotyping it and failing to keep up with theoretical developments in the field, Doan concedes that the practice of queer history needs review: an attempt to sketch its own history and to clarify its methodology (Doan, 2013, pp. 1–57).

According to Doan, in the 1970s, grassroots movements of gays and lesbians in the West started to look backwards to history, seeking models and predecessors for their then rapidly solidifying group identities. When, as already mentioned, U.S. lesbian and gay academics and activists started to secure positions in the universities in the late 1970s and 1980s, they turned this grassroots interest into a new academic field, lesbian and gay history. Reflecting its origins, lesbian and gay history looked for connections and direct identifications. A corpus of historical sources was gathered that not only widened the scope of the discipline of history but was also of practical use for the activists of the lesbian and gay movement. If lesbians and gay men had a history reaching back to the Ancient Greeks, their demands for social and legal recognition in the present were harder to ignore or dismiss. The object was to recover this past that had been "hidden from history", to quote the title of an emblematic 1989 book (Duberman et al., 1989). The aim was *continuity*: to uncover traces of "us" in the past (Doan, 2013, pp. 1–57; Kunzel, 2018).

The rise of queer theory in the 1990s led to a reaction against lesbian and gay history. Queer history came into being, whose practitioners, informed by queer theory, criticized their predecessors as wrong-headedly and crudely searching for a continuity that did not exist until the historians themselves created it through their research. Queer history, by contrast, focused on dissimilarity and historical breaks between gay men and lesbians today and queer people in the past; it was sceptical of identity categories and preferred to define its field against *normality* itself. So, queer history analysed the technologies through which the normal, and through it, the abnormal or the queer, were determined (Doan, 2013, pp. 1–57; Kunzel, 2018). This focus, as stated above, has been problematized by new directions in queer theory which asks whether the focus on the normal has ended up essentializing normality, and through it, queerness as well.

Doan characterizes the practice of lesbian and gay history as "ancestral genealogy": a teleological search for parents and progenitors in the past. Its queer-theoretical challengers in the 1990s, however, practiced what Doan calls "queer genealogy", a queer and Foucauldian insistence on alterity and historicity. The adherents of the latter saw themselves as superseding their unsophisticated predecessors, while practitioners of the former saw their supposed "successors" as ivory tower academics disconnected from the grassroots wishes and needs for an identity-confirming history (Doan, 2013, pp. 1–57). However, Doan argued, the two genealogies have more in common than they admit. Doan characterizes both as useful and essential to the practice of queer history; in her view, neither supersedes the other. Yet both share the same theoretical problem: *the starting point of modern sexual identity categories*, which the one is attached to in a positive manner, the other negatively. While certainly not lessening the value of extant queer-historical research, this is what leaves both lesbian and gay history and queer history vulnerable to queer-theoretical critique (Doan, 2013, pp. 58–93).

Doan suggests a new approach for queer history, seeking inspiration in critical history, especially the works of historian Joan W. Scott. In 1986, Scott famously posited the usefulness of gender as a category of historical analysis (Scott, 1986, see also 2010). Gender, Scott argued, allowed the historian to look critically at the history, not only of women, but of *the category* "women" itself, unfixed from essentialism or naturalization. Further, Scott and other critical historians, inspired by Michel Foucault, argued that the historian does not find the past already there, waiting in the archive for the historian to bring it to light; instead, the historian *creates* a past *in the present* that did not exist before. The critical historian, far from fearing anachronism, embraces their role as historical creator; what is important is not uncovering some historical truth about the past, but the analysis of what such "truths" *do* in the present; how bringing to light other possible historical "truths" may unsettle present certainties; and how this process opens up possibilities of change (Doan, 2013, pp. 58–96).

Thus, for Doan, going into the archive in search for either continuity with or discontinuity from present conceptions of LGBTQ+ people may indeed be *queer history*, and very useful as such, but it is not *critical queer history*. The former has as its object what Doan calls "queerness-as-being", where "queer" is the answer to an ontological question: what one *is*. The critical queer historian, however, avoids such ontological objects, instead practicing "queerness-as-method", which consists in looking into the archives in a *queer manner*, without being bound by the logic of oppositionality and categorization. This means not merely avoiding seeking out individuals based on one's present ideas of sexual identity categories, but avoiding seeking people who are, in one's present mind, *queer or deviant as opposed to normal or regular*, so seeking "to destabilize not simply the hetero/homo binary but the logic of oppositionality itself" (Doan, 2013, p. 18).

As Doan attempts to show in *Disturbing Practices*, this may allow one to find, in the archive, stories of people negotiating with "a mismatch of regulatory structures, each exerting authority or influence in one realm or another, unevenly, unpredictably, and erratically" (Doan, 2013, p. 192). These people may perhaps be seen as "queer" in the context of some of these structures but not in the context of others; they may be seen to resist one or another of these at one period in their lives but not in another; they may identify themselves with one of these structures at one time but reject such identification at another time; the power structures themselves may be in a process of change, with one in the process of succeeding another which is logically opposed to it, but both still paradoxically exerting power on subjects at once; and so on. This embrace of non-oppositional, non-dichotomous complexity may free queer history from the critique that it is stuck to a fixed referent, a stable subject it is not able to criticize: normality itself.

The demands of queer critical history on the would-be historian are heavy and luckily not presented by Doan as *necessary* to the practice of history today in the manner of one "regime of truth" superseding another. I do not claim to practice queer critical

history in all its complexity in this thesis. The viewpoint of its papers is not subjectless nor free from the logic of oppositionality; it inevitably falls short of revealing the "mismatch of regulatory structures" in the research period in their whole complexity. However, it is my hope that I have managed to avoid some of the pitfalls pointed out by Doan in adopting a kind of *oblique approach* to the papers' subjects.

Thus, Paper I critiques the collective memory of the Icelandic gay and lesbian rights struggle, but through a documentary film about the topic and its layered archives. Paper II looks at the Icelandic marriage equality debate, but through the "centrifugal force" of the interlocked movement of three objects—the National Church, the LGBTQ+ community, and the state—within the national imaginary. Paper III looks at the homonationalist inclusion of Icelandic LGBTQ+ people, but through the emotion of joy, its political deployment and affective orientation. To use a literary reference, this might be called a "Cavafian approach", citing E. M. Forster's description of queer Alexandrian poet C. P. Cavafy's viewpoint in his (often historical) poetry, where the narrator seems to be "standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe" (Forster, 1923, p. 91). Cavafy used this motionless angle in a queer manner, conjuring up queer bodies in the past and making them speak to the present, changing our conceptions of both, yet never working from anything that may remind one of modern identity categories; instead, from his "slight angle", bodies and pleasures emerge out of a newly conjured and created past "when normal wasn't"; a "queer time and place" (Halberstam, 2005; Lochrie, 2005).

Of course, applying this fluid, anti-identitarian viewpoint to recent history, as this PhD-thesis does, may strike readers as odd, as in its research period, modern sexual identity categories had very much become *de rigeur*. The subjects found in that research usually thought of themselves as belonging, fixedly, to certain categories (homosexual, heterosexual, and so on). Does a "subjectless" critique really illuminate such lives? I would argue so, as I believe that the papers forming this PhD-thesis show how those categories, even while fixed in name, were in no way fixed in meaning, even so recently as 2019. On the contrary, they constantly morph and change in relation to the criss-crossing power structures connected to the shifting national imaginary, the re-orderings of neoliberal governmentality, and their concomitant discourses of homonormativity and homonationalism. Normality and queerness show themselves to be always in flux, always relational, not only between themselves, but between the nation, ideals of joy, ideals of capital accruement, notions of the other, and so on.

But what does bringing this to light mean if one is practicing, or attempting to practice, queer critical history, making no truth claims, merely conjuring stories up out of archives? Can history do without truth-claims? Is this thesis a piece of fiction? Yes and no. As Foucault put it,

> I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or 'manufactures' something that does not as yet exist, that is 'fictions' it. One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth (Foucault, 1980, p. 193).

Or, as Halperin put it, through the study of history,

> the self discovers its past as that which dwells within its present and thereby comes to recognize in itself its own alterity to itself. History is a scholarly thought-experiment that we perform on ourselves in order to decentre ourselves by revealing, through a genealogical analysis of our being in the present, our own otherness to ourselves. In the light of history we appear different from ourselves, or from what we thought we were, and so we recover a sense of ourselves as sites of difference—hence, sites of possible transformation (Halperin, 1995, p. 105).

In the papers of this thesis, I present recent history—one that most Icelandic readers will, no doubt, believe beforehand they remember well—as radically other than they thought. The feel-good stories of progressive LGBTQ+ liberation (Paper I), marriage equality (Paper II), joyful Pride parades (Paper III) and gay men's entry into the nation (Paper IV) are disturbed and shaken, along with the narratives underpinning the imaginary of the nation told in connection with them. Importantly, this does *not* entail that what I am saying is true and the old stories are false. What I hope should come across is that my new telling of the story does not have any less of a truth claim than the old one, and this, I hope, should make the reader question the concept of historical truth itself. Thus, truth is employed methodologically in this thesis rather than ontologically: it *isn't* truth, but it *uses* truth to make its historical-political point.

However, appearing different from oneself and transforming oneself through that experience can hardly be intellectual endeavours only. History can only attach itself to subjects if it touches their emotions and affects their memories. It is towards the theories of memory and affect that I will now turn.

2.6 Memory

The problematic relationship between memory and history has long been recognized and is often represented as an antagonistic one (Nora, 1989). In such an account, memory may be represented as fickle, irrational, emotional, unsophisticated, and simply false; history, by contrast, appears monolithic, rational, cold, academic, and

true. The purpose of history, then, is to replace and correct fickle memory (Doan, 2017). Yet their relationship is by no means simple or antagonistic, as already shown in relation with Benedict Anderson's work on nation, memory, and history. A shared memory is vital for the construction of both national imaginaries and "national" histories. It underlies and binds together groups through what has been variously called collective, cultural, social, and public memory: remembrances shared between people and solidifying them as connected together and distinct from others (Olick et al., 2011).

Memory is a multivalent term which is hard to define. Astrid Erll gives it a wide definition as "an umbrella term for all those processes of a biological, medial, or social nature which relate past and present (and future) in sociocultural contexts" (2011, p. 7). In this PhD-thesis, I approach memory primarily through its ability to construct collectivities—especially the nation—out of a shared sense of the relation between past and present. Therefore, I have opted to use the term "collective memory" rather than the alternative appellations (cultural, social, or public memory). The contemporary academic use of the term "collective memory" stems from the work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, active in the first half of the 20th century. Halbwachs argued that memory was never merely individual; it was formed socially and recalled through social triggers. This, for him, was the process that made it collective.[3] Collective memory could be divided into "autobiographical memory", memories of events of one's life or events one could connect directly with it, and "historical memory", a shared memory of events of the past that one has not lived oneself, creating, in its sharedness, group coherence and permitting a claim to continuous identity through time. However, the two kinds of collective memory are by no means mutually exclusive: one's autobiographical memories intersect with and are influenced by one's historical memories and vice versa (Halbwachs, 1980; Olick et al., 2011).

Collective memories are vital in the formation of national imaginaries. They are consolidated through what Pierre Nora, in a seminal article, called "sites of memory" or *lieux de mémoire*: sites "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself … where a sense of historical continuity persists" (Nora, 1989, p. 7). Such sites become national shrines, sacred spaces of the nation (whether physical or psychological), invoking memories that present themselves as *already there,* dormant, within the national subject (Anderson, 2006, pp. 3, 200–201). In reality, these sites performatively *create* the national subject *through* their identification with the site and its collective memory, which often has a loose or paradoxical connection with the past. In Doan's formulation,

[3] One should note that Halbwachs' phrase *la mémoire collective* is not meant to imply a contrast with "individual" memory; such a contrast tends to be naturally assumed in English, but less so in French. For Halbwachs, *collective* emphasized the *social* site of memory's creation (Taavetti, 2018, p. 43).

collective memory "confirms and consolidates, distils and simplifies"; it creates an "'eternal present' to fulfil political needs and utopic desires" (Doan, 2017, pp. 118, 121–123; citing Nora, 1989, p. 8).

The collective memory treated in this thesis was formed around the events and the sites of the Icelandic LGBTQ+ rights struggle. The annual "March of Joy" (the Reykjavík Pride parade), treated in Paper III, and the passing of the registered partnership law in 1996, treated in Paper I, have become Icelandic *lieux de mémoire,* shaping the national imaginary, performatively creating national subjects, shaping both the nation and national understandings of queerness and normality.

A traditional historicist methodology would require the researcher to delve into the archive to pick the collective memory apart. In its place they would offer a chronological, linear account, based on rigorously chosen sources, which would present an objective "truth" of what "really happened". As already mentioned in the previous section, this could not be further from my aim. Here, I am influenced by the work of Laura Doan and Riikka Taavetti, who have both approached the complex interplay of memory and history from a "queer-as-method" perspective. Both emphasize the connection, rather than any contradiction, between memory and the archive, into which collective or cultural memory "selectively dips" (Doan, 2017, p. 118; Taavetti, 2018, p. 44). The queer perspective on this connection, for Taavetti, consists in recognizing the "contradictory" nature and "inevitable absences" of *any* archive, which the queer-as-method historian must not smooth over in order to "flatten past lives to fit into present understandings". Instead, Taavetti argues that "focusing on these contradictory archives with absences is one means to resist this [flattening]". Likening the archive to a puzzle whose pieces the researcher must not treat as fitting neatly into their designated spots, Taavetti argues that "archives can reveal these pieces separately and in their fragmentation underline the endless opportunity to recount yet another story and construct an infinite number of fragmentary and never completely finished puzzles from the same set of pieces" (Taavetti, 2018, p. 45).

In this way, adopting the view of critical history, the historian of collective memory recognizes themselves as a *creator* of history rather than someone who finds it already there, waiting for them in the archive (see also Section 2.4 above). This also means that the historian does not assume the *superiority* of their work over collective memory, since both function essentially in the same manner: creating stories out of archives. The critical (queer) historian, however, maintains a reflexive critical stance: they ask why some stories from the archive become collective memory while others are forgotten; why some groups from an identity out of that collective memory and not others; when these memories came to be; and in what context. This stance is especially prominent in Paper I of this thesis. In it, I analyse the collective memory presented by a documentary series on the Icelandic LGBTQ+ rights struggle through a disambiguation of three archives performatively created by it: the footage appearing in the series itself; footage

filmed for it but not included in the series, instead appearing on its archival website (which I call "the inner archive"); and sources connected with the LGBTQ+ rights struggle but found in *neither* of those two archives ("the outer archive"). By contrasting the three archives and building from them a new "puzzle" from the "same set of pieces", a critical, queer picture of the politics of memory comes into view.

Memory, however, is intricately connected with emotions. A collective can hardly be constructed through memory unless it is granted *emotional value* by the remembering subjects. It is to theories of affect and emotion that I will turn next.

2.7 Affect and Emotion

Affect has proven notoriously difficult to define. In their singularly unhelpful introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader,* Seigworth and Gregg define it as „an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities", a description that seems just as suited to describing indigestion as affect (2010, p. 1). Affect traces its history as a concept back to the 17th century philosophy of Spinoza, but it arrived into present academic vocabulary through two distinct schools of thought. One is connected to the theories of Gilles Deleuze as developed by Brian Massumi in the 1990s and 2000s. The other springs from the mid-20th-century psychobiological theories of Silvan Tomkins as developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the 1990s (Frederiksen, 2012; Wetherell, 2012).

The former school broadly sees affect as a nonconscious "intensity" within the body which precedes and is independent of social relations, discourses, traditions, emotions, and thought processes. While it may trail emotions, bodily reactions, discourses, and assertions of power in its wake, these are categorically separated from their autonomous bodily origin. Thus, affect slips the vast systems of discourse and knowledge/power thought inescapable by Foucault, among others, and seem to offer a new way of thinking through a variety of questions about power, society, politics, and human relationships (Hemmings, 2005; Koivunen, 2010; Puar, 2017; Wetherell, 2012).

As for the second school, Silvan Tomkins' theory saw affect in a more concrete manner as the biological part of human emotion, universal in all people; in his telling, affects are limited in number (eight or nine) and function as intensifiers for varied external triggers. Affect and the external trigger, in this way, work together to create complex feelings and emotions, but these are categorically separated from their origin. Thus, affect is ever-present in all human beings and free of the complex cultural baggage of emotion (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Wetherell, 2012).

In the 1990s, Sedgwick rediscovered Tomkins' then obscure theory and argued that it offered a way out of the essentialist/constructionist debate which was raging at the time

and she felt was stifling much of the humanities. The use of affect, Sedgwick argued, opened the door to a "reparative reading" of the world rather than the "paranoid reading" of so much post-structuralist criticism (where Foucault's work is exemplary). In particular, the affect of *shame* could be understood as both social and biological at once. It was, Sedgwick argued, an essential part of subjectivation; it was at once individualizing (one feels shame *alone*) and socializing (one feels shame *before others*). Thus, as already mentioned, shame could be seen as the essential driver in the creation of queer subjects. Affect theory opened up new ways to theorize and research queerness, ways that avoided the top-down, power-focused Foucauldian view (Frederiksen, 2012; Sedgwick, 2003; Sedgwick & Frank, 1995). Thus, Sedgwick's work mobilized queer studies towards the study of the affect of shame (Halperin & Traub, 2009; Love, 2009).

Affect theory is a deeply contested field, however. Some theorists maintain that affect should be seen as a prediscursive phenomenon, in itself unaffected by structures of power, while the term emotion should be reserved for the postdiscursive, power-structure-implicated performance brought on by the affect. Others argue that such dichotomies are unnecessary and theoretically unhelpful (Koivunen, 2010). Further, Sedgwick's call for "reparative readings" has led some scholars and activists to adopt a political focus on "good affects" in critical and activist work, rejecting critical pessimism for an optimistic embrace of joy and happiness. This tendency has also been criticized as blinding one to the world and contributing to what Laurent Berlant has called "cruel optimism": living in the constant hope for something better around the corner, thus putting oneself in an eternal subject position of incompleteness and inferiority (Berlant, 2011; Frederiksen, 2012; Hemmings, 2005; Koivunen, 2010).

As already mentioned, this thesis is based on a social constructionist, post-structuralist, and critical—i.e., a very paranoid—theoretical frame. As such, it is unconcerned with prediscursive intensities or human universals. It is, however, interested in affect and emotion as a performative, social, power-structure-implicated phenomenon. Thus, it makes use, above all, of Sara Ahmed's writings on affect. Ahmed avoids creating dichotomies between emotion and affect or laying weight on the pre- or post-discursive question. Instead, she sees affect/emotion as "what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects". This allows Ahmed to focus on what emotions *do* rather than what they *are,* where Ahmed's concept of the "stickiness" of emotion is vital. Emotions are not merely expressed in a void into which they disappear after expression; they affect, or "stick to", objects and bodies and may, in this way, be carried from one person to another, sticking to each, leaving traces, binding subjects together or forcing them apart. Yet emotions do not stick to all people in the same way. Some emotions stick to some bodies and subjects but not others, so defining those bodies and those subjects; emotions create groups through selective sticking, functioning both to include and to exclude. In this way, emotions "shape how bodies are moved by the worlds they inhabit" (2010, p. 230). In their sticky

connections, emotions shape the "surfaces" of individual and collective bodies, including nations, and align subjects with these bodies though public discourses by creating a "we" and "the other" (2014, pp. 1–19).

These emotions, Ahmed argues, circulate socially in an "affective economy", an economy that is very much implicated in already extant structures of power/knowledge. The complexity of this economy is premised on the fact that emotions "do not simply reside within subjects and then move outward toward objects" (2010, p. 14); they are neither "'in' the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (2014, p. 10). Thus, emotions and their economy are the basis of our "concept of the inside and outside, or the distinction between subject and object, or self and other" (Stephens, 2015, p. 278). This has special import in modern neoliberal societies. Using a Marxist frame, Catherine Chaput theorizes that, in such societies, affects/emotions accrue ever greater value through the increasing speed of their circulation among subjects (Chaput, 2010, 2018). To take an obvious, contemporary example, social media virality allows emotions such as joy, pride, fear, hate, or anger to circulate at incredible speed between subjects, and in that speed, they accrue such social value as to temporarily take over vast sections of public discourse in waves of collective feeling. The affective economy thus shows its immense and increasing power under neoliberalism.

Ahmed does not view this development through the lens of reparative reading. She has undertaken a thorough critique of the "positive affects" of happiness and joy, showing how deeply these emotions—just like the "negative affects" of shame, fear, and so on—are enmeshed in power-structures (Ahmed, 2010). This is of special importance for this thesis, for as she points out, not everyone gets to feel happiness, or at least not in the same way as the majority is constructed as feeling it. In order to analyse this inequality of affective opportunity, the function of happiness for minority groups needs particular study. Ahmed theorizes that striving towards joy/happiness means following "somebody else's goods": the goods of the neoliberal, cisgender, heterosexual, patriarchal, national majority (Ahmed, 2010, p. 56). National inclusion through joy/happiness functions as a "straightening device", demanding that LGBTQ+ citizens stay in line with normative values and orient themselves towards the correct "happy objects" (Ahmed, 2006, 2010). Through these technologies, happiness becomes implicated in neoliberal governmentality and nationalism (Cabanas & Illouz, 2019).

In this PhD-thesis, the sticky connections between happiness/joy, neoliberalism, nationalism, and queerness is essential for Papers III & IV. In Paper III, the "March of Joy", as the Reykjavík Pride parade is known, is analysed through Ahmed's theories. Viewing the emotion of joy critically, it is seen as sticking together the nation and the marching LGBTQ+ community through the rapid circulation of affect at the march, creating a mass feeling of unity. However, joy also orients the marchers towards the values and the interests of the national majority. It performs a new reality in which the

shameful past of prejudice and violence is erased, creating instead a feeling of gratefulness and homonationalist national pride. This process excludes all feelings of negativity or anger along with any people who insist on feeling and displaying those emotions. Thus, joy affects the national imaginary, performing homonormative, homonationalist inclusions and exclusions. In Paper IV, the happiness expressed by the gay men in the data set is analysed in a similar manner. It is seen as orienting them towards the values of the national majority, erasing past hurts they had faced from that majority, and so avoiding any hint of confrontation or the implication of guilt.

2.8 Summary

The theories treated thus far have much in common. Anderson's imagined nation, Foucault's analysis of neoliberal governmentality and subjectivity, his socially constructed and historicized sexuality, Butler's performativity, Duggan's and Stryker's homonormativity, Puar's homonationalism, Doan's queer critical history, Taavetti's infinitely recombinable memory-archive, and Ahmed's sticky and subject-orienting affect all assume that meaning is not fixed within the body or the world, but constantly recreated as the one moves within the other. Their theoretical viewpoints present a world in which the subject, as soon as they become a subject, becomes entangled within vast structures of power built on discourses—yet importantly, these structures are fluid and malleable; they may be subverted, they may be resisted, they may be co-opted.

Thus, Foucault's view of discourse and power/knowledge, Butler's view of gender, and Anderson's view of the nation are obviously compatible. Foucault sees power/knowledge and discourse as inseparable, since discourses create the world that they purport to describe. Similarly, Butler sees gender as a citational performance through which the perceived "truth" of the body is brought into existence where none was before. For Anderson, the nation is performatively imagined into existence by the national subject and shared with other national subjects through discourse, collective memory, and emotion. In this way, nation, sexuality, and gender emerge out of discourse and inscribe themselves on the world.

However, not every national, sexual, and gendered subject is equal. Nation, sexuality, and gender are constructed within already existing power-structures and hegemonic discourses. Not every national subject gets to remember the "national" past the same way, or to take the same subject positions within discourses of nationality, or join in the emotions circulating among other national subjects. Thus, performativity is always implicated in technologies of difference.

For Duggan, Stryker, and Puar, gender, sexuality, race, class, and so on function as differentiating factors on and within the national imaginary, excluding some, including others. All are socially constructed, regulatory concepts, categorizing subjects within a simplifying intersectional system. Queer theory, homonormativity, and homonationalism

offer an analytical frame to understand this system as regards the problem of queerness within the modern, neoliberal, Western nation-state. Further, Doan's queer critical history allows us to challenge that very system of categorization by historicizing it, showing up the paradoxical discourses underpinning it.

Using these theoretical frames has allowed me to illuminate a main theoretical question running through this thesis, namely: what happens when queerness intersects with neoliberalism and nationality? Where the three concepts meet, what new discourses are produced, what new regulations come into being, and what effect do they have on the world? These questions, implicitly or explicitly, guide the four papers of this thesis.

3 Background and Context

In this chapter, I aim to briefly draw up a picture of the historical background and context of the papers of this thesis, in order to 1) show my particular view of that background, against which my arguments in the papers may be judged and criticized, and 2) to facilitate understanding of the papers for readers who are not versed in Icelandic history and historiography.

First, I will discuss the nationalist narrative of Iceland's history which was constructed in the 19th century and still—despite historians' desperate attempts at revision over the last four decades or so—dominates Icelandic public discourse. This is important since, as I will argue, the progress narrative discussed in the Introduction is intimately connected with this nationalist narrative, both reinforcing it and partly replacing it. Then I will move on to the peculiarities of the nationalism which informed this narrative. I will discuss the figure of the "True Icelander"—the rural, male, isolated, independent, healthy farmer—constructed through the figures excluded by it: the urban, female, foreign-influenced, dependent, sick deviant. Then I will discuss queerness in relation to Icelandic nationalism in the 19th and early 20th centuries at some length before moving on to the entry of neoliberalism in Iceland in the 1990s and its effect on the Icelandic national imaginary and its national myths.

3.1 The Nation Imagined

In the 9th century CE, so the endlessly repeated story goes, Iceland was settled by Vikings who sailed from Norway to escape the tyranny and taxation of an overbearing king. These Vikings became the first Icelanders, instilling in the new nation their own distaste for kings, taxes, and state intervention. Despite the harsh conditions of Iceland, the Vikings farmed the countryside, growing ever stronger through their daily battles with the elements. These Viking-farmers were also poets and authors: they wrote the Icelandic Sagas, those tales of manly heroism unmatched elsewhere in the world in their vigour and pithy wisdom; through them, they preserved the pristine, rugged, and unchanging character of the Icelandic language, which is the very soul of the nation and a mirror of the country's landscape. But then, in the thirteenth century,

> Iceland became subject to evil foreigners [first Norwegians, then Danes] who thought only of tormenting the nation and exploiting it of as much money as possible. Slowly, the country was enveloped in the darkness of despair and lethargy which came to consume this intelligent and important nation. After some six centuries of humiliation [i.e., in the nineteenth

> century], the dejected nation had the surprising good fortune that a group of extraordinary intellectuals was born among its ranks. Most of them sailed abroad [mostly to Copenhagen, then the capital of Iceland] in order to gain knowledge and reputation, studied many useful subjects, and became acquainted with the most important movements in European politics. During this time, the common peoples of the world were casting off the shackles of absolutism under the banner of liberalism and nationalism. The intellectuals told their compatriots: "The day has come!" The common people of Iceland, bent under the yoke of foreign [i.e. Danish] power and their own poverty, perked up their ears and accepted the new theories from abroad as their own. Then, the struggle for national liberation began, a struggle which has resulted in a society defined by democracy, progress, and wealth—the Iceland of the present (Hálfdanarson, 2001, p. 45).

Thus, historian Guðmundur Hálfdanarson sums up the nationalist narrative that has been constructed around Iceland's history—a founding myth with all its customary characteristics: a Golden Age (the "Free State" of Iceland from the 9th to the 13th century); a long, shameful decline (the 14th to the 18th centuries under Norwegian, then Danish rule); a national rebirth led by an expat intellectual vanguard (the struggle for autonomy in the 19th and early 20th centuries, achieved in 1918, and independence, achieved in 1944) (Hálfdanarson, 2001). This narrative has proven extraordinarily resilient. Despite the revisions of academic historians since the 1980s (Hálfdanarson, 1995, 2003, 2011; Jóhannsson et al., 2003; Karlsson, 1999; Rastrick & Hálfdanarson, 2006), it largely retains its cultural status today. For example, in a notorious (among historians) 2007 report on "The Image of Iceland" published by the Office of the Prime Minister, we find the claim that:

> A natural vigour resides in the nation which has been formed through cohabitation with a harsh but munificent nature. Icelanders possess characteristics which have played an important role in the nation's struggle for life [ice. *lífsbarátta*] and which now form the basis for a vigorous business sector, a bountiful cultural sector, and a progressive society. The vigour and adaptability of the nation has made Iceland one of the most competitive countries in the world. *It is important to make sure that Iceland continues to be "best in the world"—a country that offers its nation the best quality of life possible* (Grönfeldt et al., 2007, p. 4, emphasis in the original).

So, this myth insists that Iceland is a true nation-state among nation-states, with a history reaching back to the Middle Ages, an extraordinary literary heritage, and an innate, national desire to be free and independent. Through much of its history, it has been thwarted in this by foreign powers. Yet despite these difficulties, or even because of

them, the nation has reached its telos—independence—and has thereby become the "best in the world"—though this status is precarious and needs to be constantly fought for and maintained. I propose performing the Foucauldian move of analysing these nationalist discourses, not for their *contents,* but for their *social effects* (see Section 4.2 below). The question, then, is not "is this myth true?", but "what does this myth do"? I will attempt to answer that question in the following sections.

3.2 The True Icelander/ The Suspect Woman

One vitally important function of the Icelandic national myth is the creation of an inside and an outside of the national imaginary: it constructs a certain image of the Icelander against the backdrop of his (the gender is intentional) opposite. Sigríður Matthíasdóttir's magisterial work *Hinn sanni Íslendingur: þjóðerni, kyngervi og vald á Íslandi 1900–1930* [*The True Icelander: Nationality, Gender, and Power in Iceland 1900–1930*] amply shows the gendered aspect of the myth. The national subject constructed by it is the literate male head of the farmstead, connected to the land, master of the language. Through his mastery of the double essence of the nation—land and language—he carried on the spirit of the Golden Age through the Age of Decline (Matthíasdóttir, 2004).

Hidden behind this farmer is the rest of the farmstead's occupants: the workmen, the children, and the women. Hidden behind the farm is the town; and hidden behind that are the Outlands (ice. *útlönd*), the Icelandic term for the rest of the world, connected with Iceland through the harbours of the lowly and half-foreign seaside towns. As Iceland moved towards increasing autonomy from Denmark in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these contrasts sharpened. An all-male, élite political class of (relatively) wealthy farmers became members of the restored Icelandic parliament, Alþingi, in Reykjavík. While arguing for the modernization of Iceland so that it could become a nation among nations, they also argued that the soul of the nation lay in the traditional farmsteads of the countryside, while "urbanization" (a strange term in the tiny Icelandic context), especially in Reykjavík, threatened it. Through Reykjavík's connections with the abroad, i.e., through contact with foreigners, the town was suspect, especially given its demographics. The majority of the inhabitants were women, unbound from the farmstead and the countryside and increasingly influenced by cultural trends from abroad (R. Kristjánsdóttir, 2008; Matthíasdóttir, 2004; Vilhjálmsson, 2019a).

Thus, the nationalist discourses around the "True Icelander" were paradoxical. The country's political élite, who were generally residents, if not inhabitants, of Reykjavík, condemned their place of living as anti-national; they championed the traditional farming society, but they also oversaw the modernization which destroyed it; they insisted that women should maintain their traditional, subordinate roles in the countryside, but they also oversaw the economic changes that incited them to move to the towns. These paradoxes led to the emergence of what I have elsewhere called the discourse of the "Town Disease" around the turn of the century—a discursive formation

characterizing women's migrations from the countryside to the towns, above all Reykjavík, as a venereal disease. Reykjavík, the discourse went, had become sexually infected through its intercourse with foreign sailors; lower-class women who lived there had become diseased; they threatened the purity of the countryside and thereby, the nation itself (Vilhjálmsson, 2019a).

This discursive formation would continue in circulation until 1940, when external circumstances led to a supercharging of the misogynistic, xenophobic, and nationalistic tendencies inherent in it. In that year, Iceland was occupied by British forces as part of the Battle of the Atlantic; Britain later transferred the occupation to U.S. troops. At the occupation's height, around 25.000 troops were stationed in Iceland—a fifth of the population. In a country where the arrival of a single American navy ship in Reykjavík harbour in 1925 had caused worried, sexually charged debate in the Reykjavík papers and led to calls for a morality police, the arrival of all these soldiers was seen as a cataclysmic event (Vilhjálmsson, 2019a). It set off a cascade of moral panic discourses about what became euphemistically known as "The Situation" (ice. *ástandið*): the danger of Icelandic women and girls sleeping with, or being raped by, foreign troops, so violating and staining the purity of the national body. The government responded with "the most widespread spying campaign" in Iceland's history in order to sniff out women who consorted with troops (Whitehead, 2013, p. 117); many young women and girls were arrested for this sake and forcibly moved to a prison camp in the countryside, where they were to be rehabilitated from the dangers of urban life and sex with foreigners. A nationalistic fervour gripped the country, strengthened even more by World War II bringing Iceland *de facto* independence from Denmark, which was officially declared in 1944 just ahead of Denmark's liberation from Nazi Germany (Baldursdóttir, 2023; Hafsteinsdóttir, 2017b; Helgadóttir, 2004).

Here, we have seen how the national myth constructed the True Icelander as male as opposed to female and as rural as opposed to urban. Next, we will see how he was constructed as opposed to the foreigner, or "outlander" (ice. *útlendingur*).

3.3 Icelander/Outlander

In 1905, a colonial exhibition was held at the Tivoli amusement park in central Copenhagen, showcasing the exotic inhabitants and culture of Denmark's overseas possessions (Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland in the North Atlantic; the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean) in a human zoo. Though such exhibitions were common for colonial powers at the time, this was the first of its kind in Denmark. Indeed, the Danish colonial empire was in many ways an unusual one, a fact reflected in the very name of the exhibition: "The Danish Colonial Exhibition along with an Exhibition from Iceland and the Faroe Islands" (da. *Dansk Koloniudstilling samt Udstilling fra Island og Færøerne*), which emphasizes the racial hierarchy of Denmark's possessions. Greenland and the Virgin Islands, with their racialized populations, are identified as *colonies proper*, while Iceland and the Faroe Islands are presented in an ambiguous fashion. They are subordinate to Denmark, which allows them to be displayed at the

exhibition, but superordinate, as whites and Nordics, to the Inuits and Blacks of Greenland and the Virgin Islands (Jóhannsson, 2003; Loftsdóttir, 2012).

Despite this distinction, there was an immediate uproar in the Icelandic and the Danish newspapers when the exhibition was announced. Angry Icelanders protested, maintaining that they were categorically different and superior from Black people and "eskimoes" (ice. *skrælingjar,* a home-grown racist term for Inuits). Unlike Greenland and the Virgin Islands, Iceland was a "cultured nation" which, for historical reasons, was subject to the Danish king; this did not mean, they insisted, that Iceland was a colony like Greenland and the Virgin Islands (the fact that this was actually granted in the exhibition's name seems to have escaped the protesters). Referring to the exhibition as a *skrælingjasýning* ("an eskimo exhibition"), they insisted Iceland could have nothing to do with it. This performative racist disassociation from colonialism is indicative, as Kristín Loftsdóttir argues, of Iceland's unusual position within the colonial imaginary of the 19th and 20th centuries (Loftsdóttir, 2008, 2009, 2012). Over the centuries of Iceland's subject status to the Danish crown, even the Danish government seemed unsure about its exact status within the realm. In official documents, Iceland was sometimes referred to as a province (da. *provinds*); sometimes as a colony (da. *koloni*); and sometimes as a *biland* ("dependency"), a Danish word used near-exclusively to refer to Iceland's and the Faroe Islands' median status between Denmark at the top and Greenland and the Virgin Islands on the bottom. Thus, the question whether Iceland may be said to have been a Danish colony or not is a controversial one: Icelandic and Danish historians continue to debate the issue (Hálfdanarson, 2014).

However, Icelandic nationalists in the 19th and 20th centuries displayed no ambivalence. In their view, Danes might, at times, consider Iceland a colony, but this only made it Icelanders' national duty to prove the opposite to the world: by loudly proclaiming their whiteness through their culture, their history, and their literature, they would distinguish themselves from the world's colonial subjects in word and deed. This was one of the goals of the Icelandic struggle for autonomy and later independence from Denmark: to avoid the suspicion of coloniality. Thus, there has been a long history of nationalist, racist othering of the Global South in Icelandic discourse, especially of Africa and the Middle East, thereby strengthening Icelandic nationality; in their difference from "us", "we" become national (Loftsdóttir, 2008, 2009). One may, in this light, understand such actions as the Icelandic government's demand, in the 1950s, that no Black troops should be stationed at the U.S. army base in Keflavík (Ingimundarson, 2004): the purity of Icelandic whiteness was seen as essential to its independence.

However, despite controversy around the topic of Iceland's coloniality, scholars agree that modern Iceland is profoundly postcolonial (Gremaud, 2014; Loftsdóttir, 2014). Obvious signs include the mandatory teaching of Danish in Icelandic primary schools, a sculpted Crown of Denmark which still stands on top of the Icelandic parliament building, and the faux-regal office of the Icelandic President, clearly modelled on the Danish king. More subtly, however, there is a strong postcolonial mentality: a fear that Iceland might be too small, its inhabitants too uncultured, its economy too disastrous,

its national pride too brittle to be regarded as a *proper* nation-state among nation-states. This is the essence of what Alaric Hall has called Icelandic "post-colonial anxiety", arguing that "mainstream Icelandic culture cultivates an anxiety as to whether Icelanders really belong to the First World" (Hall, 2020, pp. 134–135).[4] Thus, Icelandic independence is precarious: the smallest missteps or failings might relegate Iceland to colonial status, i.e., make it part, not of the First World, but of the Third: as showpieces in an "eskimo exhibition". This mentality, as I argue in the papers of this thesis, has had a notable effect on the modern queer history of Iceland.

In the next section, I will look the historical constructions of queerness in Iceland and how they have related to the imaginary of the nation. This is, and can only be, a selective overview; it does not aim at completeness, but only at drawing a picture of how queerness and nationality were constituted in relation to each other in Iceland.

3.4 Icelandic/Queer

Icelandic sources on same-sex sexual relations and queer breaches of gendered norms reach back to the Sagas of the Middle Ages (Karlsson, 2006). However, for the purposes of this overview, the entry of the specific identity of the homosexual into Icelandic discourse is of greater interest, especially since our knowledge of its has recently been enlarged through an archival find. In 2023, historian Guðmundur Magnússon published a biography of a long-idolized Icelandic youth leader and priest, Friðrik Friðriksson (1868–1961) (Magnússon, 2023). The biography has proved controversial among conservatives for its focus on the priest's erotic obsession with young boys, at least one of whom, the book documents, was molested by him. The book also presents a remarkable January 1913 letter to Friðrik from a 35-year-old tailor in Reykjavík, Guðmundur Bjarnason, who was a part of Friðrik's Christian youth organization:

> I grab the pen to write you a letter which will bring you sorrow and disappointment. I am thinking of telling you of the burden of my life, the ever-waking fire which burns away all my energy and my will to live; this burden is impossible to talk about and nobody understands it. You are the only man (besides one foreign doctor whom I consulted in vain) to whom I can imagine writing about this.[5]

[4] One should note that Hall used the term in the modern context of Icelanders' embrace of neoliberalism, not the early-20th-century context of Icelandic racist nationalism. I shall use the term in Hall's context in Section 3.5 below.

[5] Historian Guðmundur Magnússon, who discovered the letter (Magnússon, 2023, pp. 309–312), was kind enough to share his transcript of it with me in personal correspondence, for which

So far, he has written in Icelandic. Now, however, he changes languages, switching into Danish: "I am, and I shudder to say it, born homosexual (da. *homoseksuel*)". He then goes on to recount his life story, saying that he had noticed this "weakness" from the age of six, but had believed it was "natural and would pass with the age of manhood". However,

> with age, the erotic facility developed and two notable events nearly robbed me of all sense, for you cannot imagine the circumstances of being in an intimate friendship with someone you love and could almost worship, it is as if delicious food was put in front of a man dying of hunger in a transparent glass container which could not be opened and could not be broken.

Guðmundur goes on to discuss his attempted use of "poison" to kill his desires and his continuing wish to "die from himself and live a new life in Christ".

This letter is the oldest currently known example of the word *homoseksuel* or its cognates in an Icelandic context. It is telling that Guðmundur cannot find the Icelandic vocabulary to express these thoughts and so must turn to Danish; indeed, it seems very likely that Guðmundur, who lived in Denmark from 1903–1905, learned of the then relatively recent medico-sexological term *homoseksuel* from his connections to that country. Perhaps Guðmundur was even diagnosed as "homosexual" by the "foreign doctor" mentioned in the letter while in Denmark.

This Danish connection is significant. Six years before the letter was written, in 1906–1907, the so-called "Great Morality Scandal" (da. *den store sædelighedssag*) had shaken Copenhagen, involving the arrest of a number of rent-boys and their middle-class clients with an accompanying moral panic in the press. This had brought the term *homoseksuel* and *homoseksualitet* into Danish public discourse for the first time (Nyegaard, 2021). The scandal must also have done the same for Icelanders who kept up with the Danish news (and given Guðmundur's superb Danish in the letter, he is likely to have done so himself). Tellingly, Guðmundur does not feel the need to explain what the word means to the priest Friðrik Friðriksson, his correspondent—who had also lived in Denmark and whose obvious desires towards boys must be part of the reason Guðmundur chose to confess to him (Magnússon, 2023).

So, the letter implies that the new medico-sexological vocabulary of homosexuality was, in 1913, felt to be at once *foreign* to Iceland and the Icelandic language; to be deeply taboo; yet something that was *known of* and did not require explanation among those in

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I thank him. The letter may be found at: Skjalasafn Friðriks Friðrikssonar í vörslu KFUM. Bréf. 09:01. Guðmundur Bjarnason til Friðriks Friðrikssonar 18. janúar 1913.

the know. It indicated something congenital and pathological, something to be *resisted* by the subject, but also something that defined one *as a person* instead of just describing acts one had committed or desired committing. Guðmundur, then, is the first Icelander known to belong to what Foucault, in *The Will to Knowledge,* called the new "species" of the homosexual: subjects who had been categorized, pathologized, essentialized, and subordinated on account of their same-sex desires (Foucault, 1978, pp. 42–43).

The novelty and power of this identification is apparent when Guðmundur's letter is contrasted with an older source. In 1881–1882, 20-year-old Latin School student Ólafur Davíðsson kept a diary, which I transcribed and edited in 2018 (Davíðsson, 2018). In it, Ólafur's love relationship with a 15-year-old male fellow student, Geir, is detailed. Ólafur refers to Geir as his "girlfriend" and implies that he sees their relationship through the prism of Ancient Greek pederasty, which he knew of from school texts such as Plato's *Symposium*. He obviously does not consider himself "homosexual", a term he had never heard of. As I have argued elsewhere, Ólafur saw his love for Geir as a temporary (but intensely gratifying) phenomenon connected to the heterotopia of the Reykjavík Latin School. After graduation, he believed (wrongly, as it turned out) that he would go on to marry a woman, despite admitting to his lack of sexual interest in them in the diary. He does not give any indication that he feels his relationship for Geir is something shameful, except insofar as *all* sexual desire was potentially a source of shame for him (Vilhjálmsson, 2020). Thus, the "burden of my life", the self-pathologizing identity found in Guðmundur Bjarnason's letter 31 years later, would be wholly alien to Ólafur. The difference between these two sources, Ólafur's diary and Guðmundur's letter, separated by a mere three decades, lies in the quiet introduction into discourse of the category of homosexuality as something so foreign that it could not even be expressed in the Icelandic language—something to be confessed to in secret and kept within oneself, but also defining oneself from birth and for life.

This cultural understanding of homosexuality as deeply taboo and un-Icelandic would have a great effect over the next decades. Sex between men was illegal. Since 1869, "intercourse against nature" had been forbidden and punishable by incarceration under Icelandic law (adopted from a Danish model). However, nobody was convicted under this law for performing same-sex sexual acts with consenting adults until 1924 (Þorvaldsdóttir, 2007). That year saw the case of Guðmundur Sigurjónsson, a wrestler and an anti-alcohol vigilante during a time of prohibition in Iceland. This occupation made Guðmundur enemies among Reykjavík's bootleggers, one of whom sent a letter to the Reykjavík police accusing him of "*homoseksualisme*" (again using a Danish word) and claiming Guðmundur had abused him sexually. While the bootlegger retracted his claim in another letter shortly afterwards, the investigations had already begun. Guðmundur was arrested and interrogated along with a number of his acquaintances, four of whom admitted to having had oral or manual consensual sex with him. Guðmundur initially denied everything but, after a week in isolation, confessed, saying

that he had "believed it to be neither a sin nor forbidden by law" and emphasized that he was also attracted to women (Kristinsson, 2017, p. 122).

This would seem to offer all the elements for an Icelandic "Great Morality Scandal": the revelation of a "homosexual subculture" in Reykjavík with an accompanying moral panic. Sources indeed point to a great and prurient interest shown in the case in the Reykjavík streets. Yet the town's newspapers were mostly silent about the matter and the authorities were clearly reticent to prosecute the case. Remarkably, only Guðmundur was charged but not the men he had sex with, despite both being equally guilty according to the letter of the 1868 law. Behind the scenes, a prominent doctor lobbied on Guðmundur's behalf, arguing that homosexuality, according to the newest research from abroad, was congenital and the law prohibiting it outdated. The Reykjavík police chief argued in a letter to the Minister of Justice that it would be best for everyone if Guðmundur left the country and the case be dropped. But Guðmundur stayed, was sentenced, and served a short jail sentence before being granted royal pardon (Hafsteinsdóttir, 2023; Kristinsson, 2017; Tómasdóttir, 2020; Þorvaldsdóttir, 2007).

Thus, the case was successfully kept out of public discourse, though it still occasioned Halldór Laxness, the author, to sardonically remark in an article that "Reykjavík has in one fell swoop come into possession of everything befitting a metropole, not only a university and some cinemas, but also football and homosexuality [*hómósexúalisma*]" (cited in Benediktsdóttir, 2022b, p. 197). This was the first time the word appeared in Icelandic print, and it is telling that it did so in the context of a foreign, modern culture gaining ground in Reykjavík, Iceland's main connection to the wider world.

A reticence towards making homosexuality a topic of public discourse in Iceland was apparent over the following decades. Iceland followed Denmark's 1933 lead in decriminalizing sex between consenting same-sex adults in 1940, but remarkably, the change was made without any discussions in parliament or the press. When homosexuality was discussed in the press, it was in connection with other countries. Homosexuality was *somewhere else* and near-exclusively between men (or men and boys) (Benediktsdóttir, 2022b). While love between women had appeared in Icelandic discourse since the mid-19th century, it usually did so in connection with the Ancient Greek lyric poet Sappho, who served as a marker of cultural and geographic distance (Vilhjálmsson, 2017). This also had the effect of sheltering Icelandic women from the constraints of and the phobias against the category of homosexuality. Ellenberger, Benediktsdóttir and Hafsteinsdóttir have recently gathered a trove of sources about queer women in Iceland who broke with gendered or sexual norms from the 18th century to the 1960s, i.e., sources from before the introduction of the lesbian into Icelandic discourse. Notably, they found a number of sources on middle- and upper-class women, especially in Reykjavík, who lived together as life partners without provoking social opprobrium (Ellenberger et al., 2022; Ellenberger & Hafsteinsdóttir, 2022). These relationships, though life-long, loving, and intense, did not define their

identities; they were not considered, nor did they consider themselves, to be "born homosexual"; and their relationships were not seen as "foreign".

However, this lack of public discourse about the concept of homosexuality did not mean that the vocabulary to discuss same-sex sexual acts did not exist. A homegrown word, *kynvilla,* was used, which may be translated as "gender error" or "error in kind", along with its synonym *kynvilling,* the related adjectival form *kynvilltur,* and the related agent noun *kynvillingur,* "one who commits *kynvilla*". A concept of some interest, it could have a variety of meanings and was not fixed to same-sex sexuality. It could indicate bestiality, paedophilia, a grammatical error (assigning the "wrong" grammatical gender to a word or name), or even the act of ordaining Iceland's first female priest ("a spiritual *kynvilla*", according to a male priest in 1974) (Hjartardóttir, 2004; Kristjánsson, 1992; "Skulu konur þegja á safnaðarsamkomum?," 1974). Generally, the word indicates a *category error*, applying a thing which normatively belongs to one category to another normatively opposed to it. This was the standard term for same-sex sexuality used in Icelandic print until the 1980s.

In the 1950s, the yellow press in Reykjavík started breaking the taboo on publicly mentioning same-sex sexuality (i.e., *kynvilla*) in connection with Icelanders as opposed to foreigners. Singled out were the worldly artists and bohemians living and working in downtown Reykjavík. Thus, the yellow papers created the discourse of the Icelandic "art pervert" (ice. *listakynvillingur*) (Benediktsdóttir, 2017b; Benediktsdóttir & Kjaran, 2022). While *kynvilla* was now presented as a phenomenon indeed extant in Iceland, the artist was still seen as a figure connected to modernity, the city, and the abroad—i.e., only tangentially Icelandic.

In the 1950s, the "art pervert" remained confined to the yellow press, with mainstream newspapers keeping their previous stance that homosexuality was a foreign phenomenon and a lowbrow topic. It was not until the sexual revolution broke out that interest in homosexuality reached the mainstream media. From the late 1960s, stories about homosexuality, especially the lesbian and gay rights movement in the U.S. and the Nordics, started appearing with increasing frequency (Tómasdóttir, 2018; Vilhjálmsson, 2017). Thereby, a small space opened up for Icelandic gays and lesbians to speak for themselves in the Icelandic media. In 1975, the first on-the-record interview with an openly gay Icelander, singer and actor Hörður Torfason, appeared in a men's magazine. An anonymous interview with an Icelandic lesbian appeared for the first time in 1980, in a radical women's journal; an on-the-record interview with Icelandic lesbians was first published in 1983 (Gísladóttir, 1980; Valdimarsson, 1983).

This gendered lag was reflected in the modest beginnings of gay and lesbian organization in Iceland. In 1976, the first (very loose) organization of Icelandic gay men was founded and given the English name "Iceland Hospitality". It was conceived of as an organization for those "who believe that so-called '*kynvilla*' is neither a disease nor an immoral activity but a part of human nature, which one neither can nor should

repress", as the organization's mission statement, sent to the media in 1976, put it. Its main purpose was "to facilitate communication between those who agree about these matters and to fight against prejudice and ignorance" (Guðnason, 2008, p. 18). Notably, the word "homosexuality" or its cognates are nowhere to be found in the statement; instead, the term *kynvilla* occupies an ambiguous position as that which the organization rallied around, but also put itself up against.

Iceland Hospitality was short-lived, lasting from 1976–1978, but nevertheless influential. In 1978, a new organization, Samtökin ´78 ("The Organization of '78", abbr. S78) was created by a small group of gay men from the ashes of its predecessor. (Among them was singer Hörður Torfason, who had been the subject of the previously mentioned ground-breaking interview three years before). The organization was named after its founding year after the manner of the Danish Forbundet af 1948 (now LGBT+ Danmark), whose by-laws and mission statement were translated, with adaptations, into Icelandic and adopted by S78. Despite its all-male founding group, the organization was open to lesbians, originally defining itself as an organization of "homosexual people" (ice. "*hómósexúalfólk*"). Note that the word was put in quotation marks in the organization's original laws. In Icelandic, such quotes around a foreign loan-word indicate that the status of the word is considered ambiguous; it implies that it is used temporarily for the lack of a better, more Icelandic, word. Eventually, some lesbians joined the organization, allowing it to live up to its subtitle (though they were, for many years, much outnumbered by men) (Ásgeirsdóttir, 2008b; Ellenberger, 2016; Tómasdóttir, 2017). Much more than Iceland Hospitality, S78 was founded as a political organization aiming outwards and struggling for rights and recognition. Furthermore, it aimed squarely at "localizing" the idea of homosexuality, making it clear that there was no contradiction between being homosexual and being Icelandic (Ásgeirsdóttir, 2008b; Tómasdóttir, 2017).

Given the importance of language politics in Iceland, one should note when the current Icelandic words for homosexuality and bisexuality appeared. In 1977, a radical Armenian theatre director was interviewed in Iceland's leading socialist newspaper. The interview was wide-ranging and touched on a variety of radical sexual-political topics which, the interviewer fretted, "challenge the elasticity and clarity of the Icelandic language". Two of the troublesome words were the English terms "homosexuality" and "bisexuality". The interviewer proposed two neologisms to translate them: *samkynhneigð* (literally "same-sex orientation") and *tvíkynhneigð* (literally "double-sex orientation") (Haraldsson, 1977). These were only offered tentatively but were quickly adopted by Icelandic gays and lesbians in the 1980s: they were politically useful, as they did not indicate an "error" or deviance as *kynvilla* did, nor did they advertise their foreign origin, as *hómósexúalfólk* or its cognates did. This act of translation was a significant move, as there was no surer method of bringing bi- and homosexuality into the Icelandic national imaginary than bringing it into the Icelandic language.

Thus, a rough sketch may be drawn up of the construction of queerness in relation to nationality before the 1980s (and I stop there because, first, the question of the effect of AIDS becomes all-important in the 1980s, a subject treated in detail in a forthcoming PhD-project (Hafsteinsdóttir, forthcoming), and second, because I treat the 1980s briefly in Paper I). Gender-bending or same-sex queerness is to be found in Icelandic sources from the Middle Ages onwards, but before the 20th century, it was not contrasted with nationality. When the medico-sexological concept of (male) homosexuality quietly entered Icelandic discourse in the early 20th century, it did so as a foreign thing, a concept imported from moral panics and press scandals in Copenhagen. Thus, homosexuality was already marked as *elsewhere*, indeed as *anti-national*, as this development coincided with the intensification of Iceland's struggle for autonomy from Denmark.

Through the same process, male homosexuality became associated with modernity and the city. Thus, the rapid early-20th-century modernization of Icelandic society and the growth of Reykjavík into a small city created the ideal discursive conditions for a Copenhagen-style moral panic when the case of Guðmundur Sigurjónsson broke out in 1924. That this did not happen is significant. There seems to have been a silent discursive agreement between media and state that the case was not to be exploited publicly. Public silence was to maintain the disassociation of homosexuality from the nation; while other moral panics about sex in the city, especially anxieties about Reykjavík women sleeping with foreign men, raged in the press, and were felt to threaten the nation, homosexuality kept on being seen as radically *elsewhere*. Even when same-sex sex between consenting adults was legalized in 1940, it was done in total press and parliamentary silence.

In the 1950s, the Reykjavík yellow press started to break the taboo on associating Icelanders with homosexuality. Predictably, the figure of the modernist, Reykjavík-based, foreign-influenced artist became their phobic object. The mainstream press abstained as before. When, however, homosexuality, both male and female, became a much more prominent topic in Western media during the sexual revolution, the silence started to unravel. In the 1970s and 1980s, Icelandic gays and lesbians (but, as yet, no other queer groups) started to organize and speak for themselves in the media. The presence of homosexuality in Iceland became undeniable. Yet Icelandic gays and lesbians, not to mention other queer groups, were very much outsiders in the national imaginary. In a letter to a Danish lesbian and gay journal from 1981, S78's first chairman, Guðni Baldursson, offered a tragic, yet (ironically?) optimistic view of the situation:

> [In Iceland, y]ou must live your gay life abroad, if you don't just choose to move from the country altogether. Only abroad can you take somebody home after midnight, not to speak of having someone living with you for more than one night. Only abroad is there night life, parks and so on.

> There, you can drive out to the country, park your car in a clearing or go down to the beach. There, you can be anonymous … In fact, some of these things also happen in Iceland. There is a moderate cruising subculture, and in the discotheques, young gays and lesbians have started to dress as they like and even to dance with each other. This is accepted (by themselves) so long as they don't say the words: gay or lesbian … With time, more and more people abandon the superstition that you cannot be homosexual in Iceland; they refuse to accept being subjected to a taboo; they refuse to stay in the closet or to travel into exile. With the current developments taking place in the lesbian and gay movement, we will reach the level of Scandinavia and the Netherlands in the liberation struggle within five years (Baldursson, 1981)!

This would not happen quite as fast as Guðni predicted, but by the mid-1990s, his dream had arguably come true. Of the utmost importance for that sea-change was a transformative political development which took place in Iceland in the early 1990s: the entry of neoliberalism.

3.5 Enter Neoliberalism

In the early 20th century, as Iceland gained increasing home rule, the Icelandic political system, which previously had revolved around the question of Iceland's relationship with Denmark, was recast. Four parties emerged which remain today (with some name changes) the powerbrokers in Icelandic politics: the working-class, largely urban Socialist party; the upper-and-middle-class, right-wing Independence Party; the rural, centrist Progressive Party; and the working-class Social-Democratic party. The right-wing Independence Party was the largest, but it never gained a majority; instead, it led a series of coalition governments, periodically (but always briefly) relegated to the opposition. In a small society where "everyone knows everyone", this rigid political system was met with a constant suspicion of political cronyism and nepotism and frequent accusations of political corruption. Meanwhile, the economic fortunes of the new and fragile state swung wildly to the unpredictable rhythm of the international price and local stocks of fish, Iceland's main export product. Protectionism thus became the rule of Icelandic economic policy in the 20th century, with limited results, as the economy tended to suffer from high inflation (Karlsson, 2000). In some quarters, this bred an appetite for radical economic and social change.

In the late 1970s, an informal group of young members of the Independence Party started to introduce to Icelanders and advocate for a new economic-political ideology from abroad: neoliberalism. The group came to be named after a journal associated with some of its members, *Eimreiðin* ("The Locomotive"). *Eimreiðarhópurinn,* or "The Locomotive Group", slowly gained influence within the party and in Icelandic society more generally over the course of the 1980s. Among their victories were leading

member Davíð Oddsson's election as Mayor of Reykjavík in 1982, the privatization of various public companies throughout the 1980s, and the end of the state broadcast monopoly in 1986 (Gissurarson, 2006; Karlsson, 2000; Ólafsson, 2011; Stefánsson, 2010). The Locomotive Group's rise culminated in Davíð Oddsson's general election victory in 1991, making him the Prime Minister of Iceland's first avowedly neoliberal government. Importantly, under Davíð Oddsson's government, Iceland entered the European Economic Zone in 1994, which opened the country up to free movement of labour from Europe. This transformed the country's population from an unusually homogenised one in the 1990s into the high-immigration population of today. This also re-oriented the attitude towards foreign influence in Icelandic public discourse. Even the traditionally nationalist right wing of Icelandic politics now advocated integration into foreign markets. Protective barriers against the abroad were torn down. From the 1990s, Iceland was much more seldom represented as being isolated, surrounded by hostile, foreign forces (though these discourses made a comeback with the economic crash of 2008). Iceland was now very much a part of the world, indeed *in competition with* the world (Kristmundsson, 2003; Ólafsson, 2011).

Clearly, this rise of the neoliberal worldview had a strong effect on the imaginary of the Icelandic nation. As discussed above, Laurent Berlant argues that "the [neoliberal] right's attempt to shrink domestic government and thereby to hack away at the hyphen between the nation and the state has required the development of new technologies of patriotism that keep the nation at the centre of the public's identification while shrinking the field of what can be expected from the state" (Berlant, 1998, p. 174). In recent years, the effect of such technologies have been studied by Icelandic academics. Árnason and Hafsteinsson (2018) have found technologies of patriotism at work in the intensifying management of death and grief in Icelandic society from the 1990s on, while Alaric Hall argues that Icelandic post-colonial anxiety became bound up with neoliberalism over the 1990s and 2000s. Icelandic culture had long "cultivated an anxiety as to whether Icelanders really belong to the First World"; now, it came to situate neoliberalism "as a marker of belonging to this club". This neoliberal post-colonial anxiety came to occupy a "central place … in Icelandic identity" and so became "one important reason why neoliberal economic policies enjoy the support they do" in Iceland (Hall, 2020, pp. 134–135).

Finally, the neoliberal governments' opening up of Iceland to immigration, especially from Eastern Europe, led to the creation of a new subject position: that of the LGBTQ+ migrant to Iceland. It is notable how little this subject position figures in the public discourse studied in this thesis, which tends towards strong dichotomies between the native Icelandic LGBTQ+ subject and a stereotype of the foreign, homophobic migrant. In this binary representation, the LGBTQ+ migrant is not assumed to exist, in much the same way the Muslim LGBTQ+ subject position is represented as impossible in European homonationalist discourses (El-Tayeb, 2012). In her recent PhD-thesis in Anthropology, Linda Sólveigar- og Guðmundsdóttir uses interviews with LGBTQ+ migrants to demonstrate the existence of an LGBTQ+ migrant hierarchy in Iceland.

Racialized migrants from the Global South occupy the strongly excluded bottom tier, Central and Eastern Europeans the semi-excluded centre, while white migrants from the Global North find themselves at the tolerated and well-included top. The latter group's privilege stems from fitting into preconceived notions of "correct" Icelandic queerness which appears dependent on the intersection of whiteness, "Western" neoliberal cultural background, and middle- and upper-class status. Thus, the privileged LGBTQ+ group is supported by, and in turn supports, the pre-existing privileges of the cis and heterosexual national majority, thus participating in the regulation of LGBTQ+ subjects in Iceland (Sólveigar- og Guðmundsdóttir, 2024).

The discursive bond between nation, state, and neoliberalism has seldom appeared as clearly as at the opening of Smáralind, the capital area's largest mall, in 2001. The ceremony was attended by the PM, Davíð Oddsson, who gave a speech that explicitly connected the mall with the nation:

> A market square is not a place where one person receives six and another zero, but a place where one person meets the needs of another for the benefit of both, with both enriching daily life, making it diverse and flourishing ... freedom of trade and freedom of the nation [*lýðfrelsi*] have long been interconnected issues for Icelanders; success as regards the one is unsatisfactory without success as regards the other ("Glæsilegt markaðstorg," 2001, p. 28).

Picking up on this note, the mall's chief executive grandly declared that „from this day forward, [this mall] will become the covered city centre of Iceland, the mirror of the nation where it can get in touch with itself [*komist í snertingu við sjálfa sig*]" ("Glæsilegt markaðstorg," 2001, p. 28). Thus, nation and neoliberalism meet at the mirror and touch hands (like Adam and God in Michaelangelo's fresco); there, they find that they are one, connected through history. This discursive confluence runs far too deep to disappear with the Independence Party's brief fall from power in 2008–2013; as Papers II, III, and IV argue, neoliberal ideas have become a deeply rooted part of the national imaginary, one that continues to exert its hold no matter who occupies the government offices. Neoliberal governmentality conducts the conduct of left-wingers and right-wingers alike.

To summarise, in the early 1990s, a transformative change was taking place in the use and spread of technologies of nationalism and patriotism in Iceland. The old exclusionary technologies separating the urban, the foreigner, the woman, and the queer from the "True Icelander" were on the wane, though certainly not gone; in the ascendant was a new, anxious, neoliberalism-embracing openness to foreign markets and urban life. The national imaginary was in flux, the old and the new co-existing, contradicting each other, and creating new, paradoxical truths and realities. This, I argue, is the vital background to the historical changes analysed in the papers of this thesis.

4 Methods and Ethics

In this chapter, I will review the methodology employed in the four papers. I will start by discussing my approach to data collection generally before moving on to detail the sources used in the four papers concretely. I will then discuss discourse analysis, which may be said to be my main methodological tool. Next, I move on to discuss Foucauldian genealogy, which is the methodological framework used in Papers II and III. I will then consider the ethical dimension of my project before moving on to the question of perspective and positionality.

This project has, from the start, aimed to understand public discourses through public sources. Thus, private sources—letters, manuscripts, and so on—are outside of this research's scope. This means that this thesis has a top-down perspective. Even when subjects describe their private feelings and private life in my sources, they tend to do so through relating themselves to hegemonic discourses. Readers may feel that this is a drawback of the thesis. However, it is not in conflict with its aim and theoretical framework. The aim is to understand and critique the structures of power which shape, and are shaped by, public discourses; the theory sees such power-structures as reaching deep into subjectivity, suggesting that private sources are just as implicated in power/knowledge as public ones—though in a different manner, as the former may offer more insight into daily resistance to power than the latter.

My focus on public sources has led me to collect data from official reports from the National Church and the Icelandic parliament, parliament speeches, archival websites such as the vitally important LGBTQ+ history resource svonafolk.is, and books by public figures; however, my most important resources by far are the newspapers and journals stored in the indispensable digital library database timarit.is, which has been so vital for this thesis that it deserves a special preliminary discussion.

timarit.is is an open-access digital library of newspapers and journals, created in a collaboration between the National and University Library of Iceland, the National Library of the Faroe Islands, and the National and Public Library of Greenland. At the moment of writing, 6.622.265 newspaper and journal pages have been scanned and are available for reading, with more pages regularly added, spanning the period from the late 18th century to the present day. The pages are searchable through optical character recognition, creating an incredibly powerful tool for historical discourse analysis: since its launch, it has had a huge effect the study of Icelandic history, which has seen a clear turn towards discourse analysis.

This is not without its problems. First, timarit.is can provoke a certain laziness in researchers. Drawn to the ease of using it, the researcher may prefer its sources to others that are just as relevant but harder to access. Secondly, the utility of timarit.is may overshadow its (minor but real) defects. As in all databases of this kind, the character recognition is imperfect; it misses words that are split between lines and may (quite randomly) misread characters, leading to a failure to recognize some instances of the keywords. This is a problem common to all such databases (Upchurch, 2012). Thirdly, despite the size of the database, not every Icelandic newspaper or journal has been put into it; it has biases and blind spots, notably when it comes to "low-brow" publications such as men's erotic magazines or women's fashion and lifestyle magazines, remarkably few examples of which have been scanned. Thus, the researcher must keep in mind that there are important sources outside of timarit.is and that a keyword search there cannot claim to exhaust all instances of that word published in Icelandic newsprint.

I have tried to compensate for the first and third problems by being careful to use non-timarit.is sources. Paper I focuses on a documentary series; parliament speeches play a large role in Paper II; Paper IV focuses on women's magazines not found on timarit.is. As for the second problem, my aim has never been to do exhaustive searches or to claim complete knowledge of Icelandic public discourse. Striving for exhaustiveness seems to me to imply a pretension to scientific objectivity which would be in direct conflict with the theoretical basis of this thesis. The theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2 sees any claims to objectivity as belonging to a subjective and performative discourse laying claim to power/knowledge through an appeal to regimes of truth. I aim to avoid such claims. The discourses analysed in the papers are very much conjured into being by me (in the theoretical manner of critical history: see Section 2.5 above). They should not be judged on terms of their "objectivity" or their truth value, but their usefulness for historical critique. On that note, I will now turn to the data collection process of the papers of this thesis.

4.1 Data Collection

When I began work on this PhD-project, it was Paper II that I started with, as of the four papers projected for the thesis it seemed to require the most widespread data gathering. I intended to use timarit.is to analyse journal and newspaper debates about marriage equality in Iceland from 1990–2010. As this was a nexus of discourse about gay and lesbian rights in the research period, I hoped the resulting data would be useful for all the rest of the project. As it happened, the data surprised me. I had imagined, based on my own memory of the marriage equality debate, that I would find homophobic arguments from the one side (the National Church, conservatives) and human rights arguments from the other (leftists, social liberals, gay and lesbian voices). While those themes certainly featured in the data, I found that the main axis of the debate revolved around questions of neoliberalism and nation, changing entirely my

previous view. This shows how useful open-minded data collection can be in overturning the researcher's prejudices.

To find data, I initially searched on timarit.is for strategic keywords or conjunctions of keywords appearing in sources published within the research period, 1990–2010. I did a basic search with the obvious keyword *hjónaband samkynhneigðra* ("gay and lesbian marriage") (572 results, which I read through in full), but also a more complicated search for the conjunction of the keywords *þjóðkirkja* ("National Church"), *þjóð* ("nation"), and *samkynhneigð** ("homosexual*"). These conjunctions often yielded unexpected and interesting results, though they numbered in the thousands, meaning that I neither could, nor wanted to, exhaustively search through them. However, the pages featuring the closest conjunctions of the keywords were prioritized by the timarit.is search function. Thus, I read them in order of machine-determined relevance until I felt (quite subjectively) I had enough data. I made thematic notes for every article I read or skimmed, transcribing the parts I felt were of interest and adding a full citation.

Over the course of this data gathering, it became apparent that I needed to supplement the search results. I was careful to read S78's journals *Úr felum, Sjónmál, Sjónarhorn, Samtakafréttir,* and *Hýraugað* (1983–1985, 1991–1994, 1999–2010, 2010–2011) in full on timarit.is. Outside timarit.is, on the website of the Icelandic parliament, althingi.is, I read through the parliamentary debates about LGBTQ+ rights (including marriage equality) that took place during the research period (in 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004–2005, 2007–2008, and 2010). Using keywords similar to the ones I had used on timarit.is, I searched through the National Church of Iceland's (quite patchy) sermon collection on its website kirkjan.is. As for printed sources, I read bishop Karl Sigurbjörnsson's Encyclical Letter, published in book form in 2001. From this data collection, I ended up with around 170 notes, around 100 of which I used as the basis for the discourse analysis found in Paper II. I also went on to use many of these notes for Papers I & III. I found it useful to start with the notes organized chronologically, giving a good picture of the development of the discourse, but after repeated chronological reading and analysis, I reorganized the notes thematically, searching for discursive formations and tropes.

For Paper III, I used a similar method of data collection. I searched timarit.is using a variety of keywords relating to the Reykjavík Pride parade for the research period, 2000–2019 (with a special search for the two Pride marches that took place in 1993 and 1994). The keywords were *Hinsegin dagar* (the name of the NGO organizing the marches post-2000), *Gleðiganga* ("The March of Joy", the commonly used name for the post-2000 parade), and *Gay Pride/Pride*. I also searched for conjunctions of these keywords with others such as *þjóð* ("nation") and words for happiness and joy (*gleði, hamingja)*. I also read through the official Reykjavík Pride journals from the research period on timarit.is. I watched and made notes of a documentary on the Reykjavík Pride

marches called *Fjaðrafok*; I also watched various interviews with Pride organizers on the LGBTQ+ archival website svonafolk.is. As before, I took notes (this time around 200), which I organized first chronologically, then thematically. This served as the basis for the discourse analysis found in Paper III.

Paper I was based on a different methodology. The data set was purposefully limited, focusing on the three layers of archive I had identified around the documentary series *Svona fólk*: the footage from the series itself; footage filmed for the series but not used in it, instead published on its archival website svonafolk.is (the "inner archive"); and thirdly, the "outer archive" of sources that, I felt, begged the question why they were not treated in the first two layers of archive (articles from official S78 publications that offered unusual perspectives on S78's history; two important 1994 and 1996 reports on the status of homosexuality in Iceland from church and state). Thus, the data consisted of a documentary series, its archival website, two reports, and three of the S78 journals mentioned above. I also made notes on this data and used them to construct the paper's argument.

As mentioned above, ambitious though it is, not every Icelandic journal is to be found on timarit.is. For Paper IV, on behalf of the Sexual Outlaws project, Anna Rós Árnadóttir, MA-student in Icelandic Literature, went through the Icelandic glossy lifestyle magazines published in the research period, 1990–2010, which (for reasons unknown) are not available online. Skimming them all, Anna Rós found and photographed all articles on LGBTQ+ topics published there. These were thematically analysed and tagged by my supervisor and first author of Paper IV, Íris Ellenberger, using the Atlas program. 61 articles from four magazines were chosen for analysis, as they featured longer interview formats and went into greater depth. Out of these, the decision was made to focus on interviews with gay men, who were vastly overrepresented in the data, turning that overrepresentation into a critical, analytical angle. How this analysis was performed is the topic of the next section.

4.2 Discourse Analysis

For Paper IV, Landwehr's (2018) three-stage model of historical discourse analysis was used to analyse the data. This consists in, first, situating the data socio-historically; secondly, searching for recurring statements in the data and using them to categorize it into distinct discourse formations; thirdly, analysing these discourse formations historically and inter- and intra-discursively. In the other papers, however, a less strict method of analysis was used, which, while not disparaging Landwehr's, I argue may have a special utility. Using it, one does not need to rely on recurrence to find discursive formations and one becomes more open to the role of *silence* as part of discourse (Foucault, 1978, p. 12). I will now turn to this methodology.

In analysing the sources of Papers I–III, I was influenced by Foucault's somewhat "loose" practice of discourse analysis. In a Foucauldian manner, I see discourse as a

loosely related network of statements and silences; what relates one statement to another, or a telling silence to a statement, is inevitably in the eye of the observer and this remains so no matter the exhaustiveness of the data set or the strictness of the analytic model. Meaning, as classical scholar Charles Martindale put it, "*is always realized at the point of reception*" (Martindale, 1993, p. 3, emphasis his); thus, there is nothing and no one that relates one statement to another in discourse except the (always already biased) receiver of the statements. However, this receiver can critique the discourses they perceive and so, create counter-discourses; those who receive both discourse and counter-discourse can compare the two, thereby perhaps developing their own critical view of discourse and power.

In analysing his loosely and subjectively constructed discourses, Foucault's methodological originality lies in not foregrounding their *content,* but their *effect;* not what they *say* so much as what they *do* in the world. In Halperin's summation, the Foucauldian method requires the researcher to "step back from the game, to look at all its rules in their totality, and to examine [the] entire strategic situation: how the game has been set up, on what terms most favourable to whom, with what consequences for which of its players". Thus, "the basic method of Foucauldian discourse analysis ... is to refuse to engage with the content of particular authoritative discourses ... and to analyse discourses in terms of their overall strategies" (Halperin, 1995, p. 38). This, one should note, is not a systematic programme but a shifting of viewpoints: the adoption of a theoretical angle. It does not require a step-by-step codification; instead, it is consistent with a Foucauldian viewpoint of suspicion towards the truth-games of scientific/academic codifications, systems, and frameworks.

Thus, in Papers I–III of this thesis, my discourse-analytical methodology consists in gathering data, theorizing about the regimes of truth from which it springs and by which it is moulded, and analysing it by subjectively establishing connections between the disparate utterances and silences identified there. In so doing, I *create* discourses and discursive formations rather than finding them already there, hidden in the data. These discourses I regard as creators of new knowledge and new power relations, though ones always implicated in the regimes of truth from which they emerged. In this way, I focus on the conditions these discourses are bound by and in which they bind others and on the social effects they create, all while avoiding entanglement in the trap of the discourses' *contents*.

For example, in Paper I, I focus not so much on the *contents* of the documentary series as on the relations found between the documentary series' statements on the one hand and its silences on the other. Further, I try to add depth to the series' exclusions from memory by analysing where what is left out may be found (since silences are rarely total) and why it was not included in the first place. Thus, it means one thing for an excluded memory to appear in the documentary series' "inner archive" (published after the documentary series itself on an archival website) and another to appear in the

"outer archive" (in a report available only on paper at the National Library). What is uttered in the series changes meaning when compared to what could have been uttered (and appears in the inner archive) and what could not have been uttered (and appears outside it). A stricter focus, like Landwehr's, on recurrence and utterance as opposed to subjective connections and silences, would not have aided the analysis of Paper I's data; its methodological looseness, I would argue, can serve as an asset. I will now move on to another loose and Foucauldian methodology: genealogy.

4.3 Genealogy

In Papers II & III, my methodological framework is based on Foucauldian genealogy, the theoretical aspects of which I have already discussed in Section 2.3. Here, however, I will discuss the practical aspects of the term.

Foucault never defined his genealogical methodology in detail (instead giving it a somewhat poetic treatment in Foucault, 1971); instead, he showcased it through his works, especially *Surveiller et punir* and *La Volonté de savoir* (Foucault, 1975, 1976). However, in his 1978–1979 lectures at the Collège de France, he characterized his genealogical works as

> showing by what conjunctions a whole set of practices—from the moment they become coordinated with a regime of truth—was able to make what does not exist (madness, disease, delinquency, sexuality, etcetera), nonetheless become something, something however that continues not to exist. That is to say, what I would like to show is not how an error … or an illusion could be born, but how a particular regime of truth, and therefore not an error, makes something that does not exist able to become something. It is not an illusion since it is precisely a set of practices, real practices, which established it and thus imperiously marks it out in reality. The point of these investigations … is to show how the coupling of a set of practices and a regime of truth form an apparatus (*dispositif*) of knowledge-power that effectively marks out in reality that which does not exist and legitimately submits it to the division between true and false (Foucault, 2008, p. 19).

In my own praxis, I have tried to follow Foucault's example as it appears to me in *Surveiller et punir* and *La Volonté de savoir* by 1) showcasing an event, a discourse, and/or a situation which, when inspected "at an angle", problematizes a given that enjoys largely unquestioned acceptance in the present. Then, one 2) appeals to the past to understand how this problem came to be, analysing the paradoxical discourses which have created it, and through them, the apparatus of power/knowledge and the regimes of truth from which it has emerged. Finally, 3) having brought these paradoxes, these discourses, and these power structures into the light, one challenges

the reader as to the "givenness" of the original research object and suggests instead another way of seeing the present, a new way presented not as *truth* but as *possibility for transformative future practice*.

For example, in Paper III, I challenge the reader as to the meaning of the Icelandic "queer paradise" as performed by the annual Reykjavík Pride parade, whose positive value has been treated as given in Icelandic public discourse. I begin by 1) pointing out a problematic event—the arrest of a queer activist at the 2019 march on utterly fantastical grounds—that unsettles the given and begs questions not before asked. I then 2) trace this event to the founding of the parade in its current form in 2000 and argue that its association with the emotion of joy is at the root of the problem. Using affect theory, I trace the effect of this discursive association through the years and analyse its reorganization of structures of power to advantage some LGBTQ+ subjects and disadvantage others—such as the queer activist arrested in 2019. Finally, 3) I challenge the reader as to the givenness of their previous beliefs; I encourage them to rethink the Icelandic discursive association of joy and queerness and propose instead to see liberatory potential in the figure of the queer killjoy, so turning the former given on its head. Much the same may be said of Paper II's methodology.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

However, there is an ethical problem at the root of using Foucauldian genealogy to question and unsettle the givens of the history of Iceland's LGBTQ+ movement. Foucault argued that the "purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation" (1977, p. 162). I find this unproblematic in the case of national identity, given its unambiguous status as an exclusionary, regulatory regime. The question grows more pressing, however, when it comes to *sexual and gender identities* which have become entangled in the national identity to be "dissipated". If the identities "dissipated" by one's research are both prized by and politically useful for marginalized groups, is it ethically right to pursue the research? Not to mention if one does not oneself belong the groups in question, as I indeed do not (and as I shall discuss in the next Section).

Here, I believe the question of *utility* plays an important role. As queer theorists have amply shown, a stable, fixed identity may be politically and personally useful, empowering, and precious, but it may also prove exclusionary, dangerous, vulnerable to misuse, and disempowering (Brown, 1993; Butler, 1990, 1993; D'Emilio, 1983; Frello, 2012). In precisely the same way that identity can empower, encourage, and allow one to find solidarity with others—to practice resistance—it remains implicated in power structures in which said identity may be used to exclude others, create barriers, and make one vulnerable to further marginalization, should certain political winds change. Thus, the ethical imperative of my research is to critique and "dissipate" identity formations in the present—both national and sexual—insofar as they contribute

to the regulatory regimes of homo/heteronormativity, nationality, and neoliberalism. Yet I do not aim to destroy them and leave nothing in their place (as if such a thing were possible); instead, I aim to show the possibility, the potentiality, and the utility of rethinking and disturbing identity through history, which may offer space for a different, and perhaps preferable, life from what came before. In short, once identity has been "dissipated", by necessity something new will appear in its place; the ethical weight lies in this something being of use—something that opens up, rather than closes down, potentialities for future conduct.

Thus, to take the example of Paper III again, in pointing out the problematics of the "March of Joy", I am most certainly not calling for an end to the march itself. Instead, I hope that, through critique, the march may be rethought and reformed around a new orientation and ideal and so, to recover its potentiality as a radical event. In the case of Paper II, in subjecting neoliberal marriage and marriage equality to critique, I am not condemning those who marry (which would be base hypocrisy) but attempting to open up a space for the rethinking of the potential of marriage as a performative act in neoliberal society. Even while marriage regulates entry into the neoliberal nation, marriage equality may be used strategically to resist the conditions laid for such inclusions. In this way, genealogical "dissipation" may be seen as a prelude to resistance, rather than an act of arrogant destruction of what people value most.

4.5 Perspective and Positionality

However, my perspective and position on this issue requires some reflections. As a cis, heterosexual, white, native, Icelandic national subject, I belong in all instances to a privileged majority group. Thus, in engaging with Icelandic queer history, I am writing on a topic that affects the lived experience of a marginalized group—LGBTQ+ Icelanders—while gazing on it from a privileged, central position. Thus, there is an unequal relationship between spectator and spectated. This might also mean that my view of the power-structures regulating LGBTQ+ people in Iceland is mistaken, given my lack of personal experience of those structures.

To try to account for this imbalance, I have made an effort to read, take to heart, and use the writings of queer academics (such as Michel Foucault, Laura Duggan, Jasbir Puar, Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, and Laura Doan) for both theoretical, methodological, and analytical purposes. I hope that they may supplement my blind spots, supply the viewpoints that I personally lack, and make me more familiar with experiences not my own. I would also like to emphasize that my research does not focus on the individual lives of LGBTQ+ people or use sensitive personal sources. My research focuses on public discourses and deliberately uses public sources only. Through these sources, I am not, in fact, writing a history of LGBTQ+ people in Iceland, but rather a history of the present construction of the national imaginary, of public conceptions of the inside

and the outside of that imaginary, and of shifting power relations between subject and citizen, *through a queer lens*.

Thus, the object of my researcher's gaze is not so much LGBTQ+ people as *the technologies behind the straight majority's self-positioning as the centre and reference point of the national imaginary through the management of their queer others*. Thus, being a member of that majority during the research period, the researcher's gaze is mirrored, taking in my own position and hopefully deconstructing it. The shifts and changes in the dynamics between majority and margin which I describe in the papers are indeed familiar (though still strange) to me from lived experience; for example, I have always felt an inexplicable sense of national pride while watching the March of Joy, a feeling which I otherwise seldom feel, being raised as something of an anti-nationalist. This thesis has been one way of finding out why.

5 Discussion

In the four papers of this thesis, a popular narrative of Iceland's recent history is questioned and disturbed. This narrative, I argue, constructs a progressive movement of some Icelandic LGBTQ+ people from an outsider to a model status in the nation. This shift, the narrative goes, was accomplished from below by LGBTQ+ activists who won hearts and minds through joy and marriage; the activists, in this way, brought the willing nation with them into free, happy, tolerant, neoliberal modernity: the present moment of utopian, national superiority over backwards, homophobic others.

In the papers, another story emerges that does not seek to supplant, but to problematize this popular narrative. It sees the very real changes in LGBTQ+ people's status in the research period not through a progressive narrative arc but through a complex frame of competing interests, accommodations, regulations, inclusions, exclusions, discourses, and silences. The changes are traced to reforms from above rather than just activism from below. They are seen as having quietly left behind all the letters of the LGBTQ+ acronym besides the first two. Marriage and joy are seen as technologies of regulation for adapting lesbian and gay subjects to neoliberalism. The nation is seen as an imaginary that morphed and changed in order to incorporate some elements of the LGBTQ+ community while leaving out others.

In the following sections, I will discuss each of the thesis' four papers and their findings, before making conclusions from the whole in the next chapter.

5.1 Paper I: Into the Enclosure: Collective Memory and Queer History in the Icelandic Documentary "People Like That"

In the first paper, I trace how the collective memory, or progress narrative, described above came to be. It emerged, I argue, from the rise of neoliberalism in Iceland in the 1990s, its consolidation in the 2000s, and its effects on the national imaginary. Icelanders increasingly started to see themselves as defined not by traditions from the pre-neoliberal past but by their striving for entrepreneurial growth and competition in the present. Here, what Hall (2020) termed *post-colonial anxiety* played a role, i.e., Icelanders' doubts as to whether they really *belong* to the club of First-World nations, given Iceland's tiny population and history of dependence on larger states (see Sections 3.1 and 3.3). If Icelanders failed to meet neoliberal standards, they could become relegated, in their own eyes and those of the world, to the racial and cultural "darkness" of the Third-World post-colonial states. In this context, a narrative of Icelanders' extraordinary acceptance of LGBTQ+ people was an asset, as such equality narratives are held to indicate First-World status in themselves: only a First-World

country, the argument went, would include its gays and lesbians so readily and so well. This story also dramatizes a view of history which fits the historical view of neoliberal idealogues perfectly: that in the pre-neoliberal past, the country was backwards, grey, dull, protectionist, patronizing, and homophobic; all the while, it was unfulfilled and waiting for liberation in the form of neoliberalism, after which the nation became modern, colourful, happy, free, equal, and LGBTQ+-friendly. Finally, this story presents the nation as blame-free. It, the story goes, took the gays and lesbians' side, moving ahead of the sluggish state and the National Church in its extraordinary tolerance and acceptance. Thus, it confirms notions, not just of Iceland's First-World status, but of its national superiority over others in that World.

This collective memory—like all such memories—brings some things forward while hiding others in their shadow. As the paper argues, by promoting the narrative of gay and lesbian rights arising because of pressure from below, one hides the role that the state and the National Church played in conducting and directing how those rights were gained, what rights were prioritised, and who benefited from them. Focusing on national inclusions of gays and lesbians hides the continuing or increasing exclusions of bisexuals, trans people, and other queer groups. Characterizing LGBTQ+ Icelanders' struggle as aiming at normativity, marriage, and nationality obscures any radical queer critique that was directed against these norms.

Marriage, especially, takes on an important role in this collective memory. It functions in much the same way as in folk tales or classical comedies: it provides a "happily ever after"-ending and resolves the plot. Thereafter, the story tells itself, moving inexorably towards its self-evident goal: happiness "'til death do us part". This function of marriage in the story of LGBTQ+ Icelanders' national inclusion deserves a deeper critique, undertaken in the next paper.

5.2 Paper II: The Centrifugal Force: Neoliberalism and Nationality in Iceland's Marriage Equality Debate 1996–2015

The Icelandic marriage equality debate of 1996–2015 has been the object of academic attention in the field of theology and has become an important part of the collective memory of Icelandic LGBTQ+ acceptance. Yet an important part of that debate has escaped attention: its connection with the topics of neoliberalism and nationality. The debate's main poles were formed around the Icelandic National Church on the one hand and Iceland's lesbian and gay community on the other, with the state occupying the middle ground. The lesbian and gay community appealed to the legislature for marriage equality, while the National Church opposed it, arguing that same-sex "registered partnerships", which it accepted, were fundamentally different from heterosexual "marriage". This much is uncontroversial. However, what has not been previously elaborated is that the Bishop of the National Church during the height of the

debate, Karl Sigurbjörnsson, traced the call for marriage equality to neoliberalism, which he argued was destroying Icelanders' traditions and moral compass. Also forgotten is Karl's appeal to what scholars have called the "Nordic fusion" of National Church, state, and nation, that special feature of Nordic nation-states. The bishop and other prominent clergymen argued that, given the "Nordic fusion", the church, and not the state, had the ultimate power over marriage in the land.

At the same time, the progress narrative analysed in Paper I was taking hold in Icelandic public discourse, particularly the idea of Iceland being in an international race for marriage equality, victory in which would bring the nation prestige and soothe its post-colonial anxiety. Further, neoliberal ideas about marriage were emerging, according to which marriage was a kind of merger contract between market actors whose gender was less important than the social respectability, responsibilization, and capital generated by the contract. This, I argue, explained why the neoliberal Icelandic state gradually came to push against the National Church on the topic of marriage equality. Through this process, the state increasingly incorporated some LGBTQ+ Icelanders (above all monogamous lesbians and gays) into the national, biopolitical sphere over the 2000s. The decisive moment came in 2010, when the state, unilaterally and over the protests of the bishop, changed the marriage law to allow all couples to marry, regardless of gender, and the National Church acquiesced; the last proviso the church had put up against marrying queer couples was removed in 2015. Through this process, the church had quietly been demoted from the centre of the national imaginary, with model, married gays and lesbians taking up its place.

Thus, the marriage debate may be seen through the lens of neoliberal governmentality. Through the debate's polarizations, the LGBTQ+ community and Icelanders more generally were quietly conducted and oriented towards a new, homonationalist vision of Iceland's place in the world and a new, neoliberal view and uncritical idolization of marriage as bringing subjects freedom, prosperity, responsibility, and nationality. Excluded through this process was any critique of marriage equality and national inclusion, whether from religious conservatives or queer radicals. Yet neoliberal governmentality from above was only one factor in the changes taking place in Icelandic LGBTQ+ people's social status during the research period. What about LGBTQ+ activism from below? This subject is tackled in the next paper.

5.3 Paper III: Queer Joy, Queer Killjoy: Queerness, Nation, and Affect in the Reykjavík Pride Parade 2000–2019

In the progress narrative of the Icelandic LGBTQ+ utopia, the Reykjavík Pride Parade looms large. It started in its current form in 2000 and was immediately characterized as a "March of Joy" (ice. *gleðiganga*), a name which has stuck to it in public discourse. Its great success, drawing up to a fourth of the population of Iceland as spectators, has long been seen as playing a vital part in the rights struggle. However, as the 2019

arrest of a queer activist on their way to join the march shows, there is something about the March of Joy that does not fit the popular narrative. Why are some queer people seen to threaten the march while others are welcomed in it?

In the article, Íris Ellenberger and I trace the emergence of joy as the emblem and banner of the Pride Parade. We argue that it emerged out of the same circumstances of accommodations to neoliberalism that I discuss in the previous two papers. We show how the organizers of the march intended joy to function as a non-political rallying flag that could join the nation and the lesbian and gay community together in a single emotion, leading to the affective inclusion of the latter in the former. The organizers prepared the March in such a way as to presume such inclusions from the beginning, pre-empting negative reactions, whether from homophobic conservatives or queer critics.

The effect of this tactical employment of joy was powerful and, in many ways, unpredictable. In public discourse, the March of Joy quickly succeeded in creating an emotional discursive merger between gays and lesbians and the nation. The joy of the marchers became the joy of the nation; the march became a national event, included and implicated in the nation's borders. All the while, the past was forgotten. Joy functioned as an alibi from the past, creating instead a happy, presentist oblivion. Joy avoided all confrontation with the nation for past exclusions, such as the treatment of gay men during the AIDS epidemic: it gave both the nation and the LGBTQ+ community a "fresh start". Finally, the effect of the March of Joy was to amplify and reconstruct Icelandic national pride, thus becoming a powerful new "technology of patriotism" (Berlant, 1998, p. 174). In public discourse, the march was constructed as a new, fresh, colorful version of the National Holiday, presenting the nation as modern, urban, and diverse as opposed to its previous image: backwards-looking, gray, homogeneous, and rural. This allowed Icelanders to feel a renewed, reinvigorated, and "unproblematic" national pride.

As we argue in the paper, such patriotism inexorably leads to exclusions of national others. Immigrants from Eastern Europe—Iceland's largest immigrant group—became, through the March, associated with homophobia and backwardness in the face of Icelandic tolerance and progress; queer troublemakers and killjoys, such as the queer activist arrested on their way to the 2019 March, became pushed out of the frame of the nation. Though queer, they were not seen as belonging in the March of Joy, *because joy excluded them* from both nation and nationally regulated and legitimated queerness, as represented by the marchers. Thus, the March of Joy created affective boundaries and borders, orienting the Icelandic LGBTQ+ community towards exclusionary (homo)nationalism, homonormativity, and patriotism. Yet this leaves open the question: how and why did some Icelandic LGBTQ+ people adopt this orientation and these exclusions? How did they conceive of themselves and represent themselves during this process? What did that process look like within Icelandic LGBTQ+ subjects' discourses of the self? That question is explored in the final paper.

5.4 Paper IV: 'No Bare Bottoms': The Responsibilization of the Good Gay Citizen in Icelandic Media Discourses 1990–2010

In this fourth paper, of which I am the second author (see Declaration of Contribution above), Íris Ellenberger and I consider how neoliberal subjectivity and neoliberal responsibilization crept into the self-representations of Icelandic gay men in media discourses during the research period. We study this process by analysing lifestyle interviews in glossy magazines. These are an undervalued source of data, as glossy magazines tend to be misogynistically dismissed as too low-brow and women-oriented to be culturally significant. Yet in them, LGBTQ+ subjects were given an unusual space to discuss their life stories, lifestyles, and aspirations at length. Further, these magazines were consumption-oriented and clearly influenced by neoliberalism in their presentation of their subjects, offering an unusually clear insight into the process of neoliberal subjectivization.

We chose to focus on gay men in this dataset, first, because gay men had been demonized in public discourse during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and early 1990s, and so, their rehabilitation into the nation through these magazines acquires clarity from the contrast with what came before. Secondly, interviews with gay men considerably outnumber interviews with other queer groups while also exceeding them in length and detail. This may be seen as a result of the short history of lesbian representation in Icelandic media, of the national exclusions of other queer groups such as bisexuals and trans people, and of internalized pro-male bias, found even in women-oriented media such as glossy magazines.

Using discourse analysis, we found that the gay men in the data set tended to represent themselves through three prominent discursive formations. First, they portrayed themselves as having a positive mindset. They were always striving towards bettering themselves and saw life in a positive, happy manner. They took responsibility for their own happiness and fate, refusing to see themselves as victims. Secondly, they emphasized their ability to transform themselves, taking difficult emotions and experiences and turning them to their advantage. Finally, the gay men in our dataset displaced responsibility for personal harms they had suffered onto themselves. Thus, they refused to implicate society or the nation in the prejudiced past; instead, they claimed that they themselves had been prejudiced against themselves or that past hurts in fact came from marginalized others who did not represent the nation (foreigners, drug addicts, the mentally disabled).

Thus, the governmental technologies we found employed in Paper III, where joy was used to erase the past and create a proud, happy, united, inclusive/exclusive nation in the present, are replicated at the level of neoliberal subjectivity. The gay men adapt themselves to neoliberal governmentality by internalizing, at the level of discourse, the neoliberal idea of each individual, and only that individual, carrying responsibility for

their own happiness, status, wealth, and life. In so doing, they turn their previous media demonization around and become model neoliberal citizens. Thus, the glossy magazines construct a paradigm that gay men are expected to follow lest they fall again out of the good graces of the nation.

Thus, in the four papers, we have considered the processes of conditional LGBTQ+ inclusions into the nation from four different angles: from the viewpoint of memory (Paper I), the imagined geography of the nation (Paper II), affect (Paper III), and subjectivity (Paper IV). I will discuss the conclusions that may be drawn from this in the next chapter.

6 Conclusions

> I am glad that gays and lesbians are able to confirm their love and their right to love before the law. I am glad that we are legal. I also miss something. There is, in fact, such a strange power in being outsiders. We were so incredibly unruly in our love. We are becoming more like you. We are becoming more and more similar to the society of the heterosexuals (Þorvaldur Kristinsson, interviewed in Gunnarsdóttir, 2019, 0:43:10).

So says Þorvaldur Kristinsson, one of the most prominent S78 activists from the 1980s to the 2000s. His remark appears in an undated interview in the documentary series *Svona fólk*, at a vital point in its narrative, the climax of the series: the coming into effect of the Icelandic "registered partnership" law on Christopher Street Day, 27 June 1996.

Þorvaldur's words follow dramatic and joyous scenes. The lesbian and gay community had gathered in the City Theatre of Reykjavík to celebrate with the couples who had married that day. In footage from the event, emotions are running high. The President of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, attends the event, symbolizing national inclusion and acceptance. The success of the lesbian and gay movement in achieving social change is everywhere evident. In retrospective voice-over interviews, activists describe how "everything changed" that day: this was the day they entered into the nation. The music swells. Then, Þorvaldur's words bring us back to a radically different perspective, one which the documentary does not dwell on, but quickly moves on from: up ahead are more and more victories in the rights struggle, more inclusion, more joy. But what happens if we dwell on Þorvaldur's statement, his odd expression of doubt?

As discussed in Paper I, Þorvaldur's words are characteristically well-chosen and evade easy translation. A case in point is the word *utangarðs*. While I translate this as "outsiders" above, more literally it means "outside of the enclosure", a metaphor referring to the traditional practice of denying religious minorities or criminals burial within the fenced enclosure (*garður*) of a church's cemetery. In modern Icelandic, the word is used to describe the marginalized: drug addicts, the homeless, far-gone alcoholics.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Icelandic gays' and lesbians' status may certainly be described as being "outside of the enclosure" of the nation. This was because, Þorvaldur implies, their love, in the eyes of the national majority, was "unruly" (*óstýrilát*), literally "defiant of control". But in the 1990s and 2000s, Icelandic gays and lesbians started moving into the "enclosure" of the nation. They became "more like you", Þorvaldur says, so

addressing the presumably heterosexual majority viewers of the documentary. The majority's gaze is suddenly mirrored; the former objects of the documentary suddenly turn into its subjects and vice versa. The majority finds itself in the position of asking itself: What does it mean to become "more like us"?

Þorvaldur's words turn the well-known progress narrative on its head. While "outside of the enclosure" of nation and normality, the gay and lesbian community was not powerless in exile and longing for inclusion; on the contrary, it had possessed a "strange power" *through* their outsider position. As the community adapted itself to the national majority's values, such as monogamy and marriage, this power was lost. Icelandic gays and lesbians became absorbed into norms over which they had no power. Their love was brought under control. Thus, Þorvaldur conjures up a counter-history calling into question everything the straight majority had been hitherto told by the documentary. But what did this "strange power" outside of the enclosure consist in, exactly? What does its loss mean?

In their 2009 book, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?,* Judith Butler reminds us that "subjects are constituted through norms which, in their reiteration, produce and shift the terms through which subjects are recognized". Indeed, "our very capacity to discern and name the 'being' of the subject is dependent on norms that facilitate that recognition" (Butler, 2009, pp. 3–4). However,

> every normative instance is shadowed by its own failure, and very often that failure assumes a figural form. The figure lays claim to no certain ontological status, and though it can be apprehended as 'living', it is not always recognized as a life … It falls outside the frame furnished by the norm, but only as a relentless double whose ontology cannot be secured, but whose living status is open to apprehension (Butler, 2009, pp. 7–8).

Perhaps we may see Þorvaldur's "strange power" in such Butlerian terms. In the days of "unruly love", Icelandic gays and lesbians were hard to constitute in terms of national norms. Even the words to describe them seemed alien or taboo in the Icelandic language (see Section 3.4 above). Their ontology was uncertain, their status as "life", at least as seen through bourgeois ideals of the life-giving nuclear family, was in doubt. Yet they obviously *existed* and proclaimed their existence through activism and an unruly media presence. Thus, they called the very frame of normality into question, which

> is to show that the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable. The frame never quite determined precisely what it is we see, think, recognize, and apprehend. Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality; in other words, something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things (Butler, 2009, p. 9).

As the frames of normality try to reorganize themselves to account for this spillage outside their borders, they move and shift, and in that move, they break with themselves. When this happens, "a taken-for-granted reality is called into question, exposing the orchestrating designs of the authority who sought to control the frame" (Butler, 2009, p. 12). This, perhaps, is the essence of the "strange power" of "unruly love" that Þorvaldur describes. There is a power in life and love outside of the frames of recognition of national and sexual norms; a life and love that slip their bonds and point to new possibilities in the future. This, then, is what was lost when the normative frame of the nation shifted in the 1990s and 2000s and succeeded in encompassing the previously unrecognizable gay and lesbian community, above all through the institution of marriage. This, then, is the essence of the "enclosure" of the nation.

In the preceding Introductory Chapters and the four papers discussed above, I have attempted to show how and why this change took place. In the Introduction, I asked two overarching research questions to illuminate it: 1) Where did the Icelandic LGBTQ+ progress narrative come from? and 2) What effect has it had? I then split them into six more specific questions, which I shall start with, before returning to the two overarching questions at the end.

1) *From what previously existing historical circumstances, discourses, and narratives did this new, progressive narrative emerge?*

As argued in Chapter 3, the progress narrative emerged out of specific historical circumstances. The rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s required the development of novel "technologies of patriotism" in order to maintain the "hyphen between the nation and the state" that neoliberal ideology inevitably weakened (Berlant, 1998, p. 174). The traditional Icelandic national narratives and myths of the traditional, rural, patriarchal, xenophobic "True Icelander" found themselves in crisis. New discourses of the nation emerged, ones affiliated with, but distinct from, their precursors. As I argue in Papers II & III, the new, neoliberal Iceland looked to the future instead of the past; it was engaged in a competitive race to outdo other nation-states and to assert its place in the First World; it was "open for business" with the abroad; it was more diverse; it was urban. As argued in Papers I & IV, in the 1990s, this opened a space in the national imaginary for Icelandic gays and lesbians to become a part of the modern, neoliberal nation, if they met neoliberal conditions for a life in accordance with the disembodied will of markets and morals.

2) *What memories, histories, and affects were created, promoted, or suppressed through it?*

As I argue in Paper I, when Icelandic lesbians and gays became constructed as parts of the national imaginary in the 1990s and early 2000s, an emotional reconstruction of the past followed. The AIDS epidemic and its concomitant exclusions of and phobia towards gay men and bisexuals seemed to vanish from collective memory. As I argue in

Paper III, fear, guilt, and anger faded from the narrative and were replaced by a monolithic, teleological emotion shared by both nation and LGBTQ+ community: joy. A new collective memory came into being, in which gays and lesbians led the nation in joy towards neoliberal modernity; a linear, progressive, teleological movement through the milestones of reproductive and marriage rights towards the fulfilment of the present.

3) *Who was included in the national imaginary through this process and who was excluded from it?*

Through this narrative, a set of conditions for national inclusion was quietly constructed. One needed to project one's participation in and internalization of neoliberal mores: an entrepreneurial mentality, a striving to better oneself, to take responsibility for one's happiness and life. One needed to signal one's attachment to majoritarian, moral norms (Papers I & IV). One needed to project the correct affective mien, to show joy and happiness but avoid anger, regret, or despair (Paper III). One needed to look forward, never back: the past was either to be forgotten about or reconstructed to fit into a progress narrative of one's life and that of the nation.

This meant the inclusion of monogamous, marriage-positive LGBTQ+ people (above all gays and lesbians): self-improving, responsible, happy, forward-looking, and grateful to the nation. Excluded are supposed homophobes, especially of immigrant background, who are characterized as backward-looking, traditionalist, out of step with the progressive march of the nation; but also queer people who practice alternative kinship structures, who reject the normative values of marriage, who have a critical stance towards the nation and neoliberalism, and who remind the nation of, and blame it for, the prejudiced, exclusionary past (Papers II, III & IV).

4) *What did these inclusions and exclusions do to the imaginary of the Icelandic nation?*

These shifts in the national imaginary allowed the nation to reinvent itself for a new, neoliberal era. Its claims to First World membership were now based, not on a glorious past of Viking ships and medieval literature, but on the progressive, neoliberal present and its bright future (Paper III). As a supposed world leader of LGBTQ+ people's legal rights—a queer utopia—Iceland could claim its place at the forefront of Western, homonationalist progress and disassociate itself from the supposedly homophobic, backward, and anti-neoliberal Second and Third Worlds (Paper II). Icelandic post-colonial anxiety was assuaged (Paper I). This allowed a strong sexual exceptionalism and homonationalism to grow in Iceland: the nationally included LGBTQ+ people became not just included, but model citizens of the new, neoliberal nation, symbols of its success on the world stage.

5) *What did they do to LGBTQ+ Icelanders' representations, by themselves and others, in media and public discourse?*

As we argue in Paper IV, during the research period, a new mode of representation of Icelandic gays and lesbians (but rarely any other queer groups) started to appear in Icelandic media and public discourse. These representations contrasted strongly with their often phobic and othering, but also radically challenging, predecessors prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s (see also Paper I). In the new discourses, gays and lesbians were represented, or represented themselves, as in line with prevailing neoliberal values and moral norms and so, as parts of the nation in its progressive arc. They emphasized that they were striving to improve themselves, that they were responsible, happy, monogamous, married or aspiring to marriage; they resolutely looked to the future and refused to assign blame or to express anger or critique about the past (see also Paper II). Instead, they redirected prejudices they had faced or were facing towards themselves or national others (immigrants, other marginalized people), so as to free the nation from any suggestion of blame.

6) *Who is empowered through the progress narrative and who is disempowered?*

This view of Iceland's recent history has had very real effects. Many, or even most, Icelandic LGBTQ+ people who gained inclusion into the nation during the research period have benefited a great deal in the social and especially the legal sphere. However, many were also left behind. Trans people and bisexual people, to name the most obvious examples, barely figured in public discourse during the research period; for most of it, they were not officially represented by S78; their interests were not considered when equality legislation was passed; and they were not represented in media discourses as "model citizens", as gays and lesbians increasingly were (Papers I & IV). However, the group most empowered by the discourses of Icelandic homonationalism was the cis, heterosexual, white, Icelandic majority. They found in the new view of history a reconfigured national pride which strengthened their identities and assuaged their anxieties; it confirmed neoliberalism as the ruling ideology in Icelandic society and promoted a joyful, past-effacing national unity that benefited those already socially privileged (Papers II & III).

Disempowered through this process were immigrants stereotyped as homophobic, the anti-neoliberal National Church, and native, conservative homophobes, all seen as out of sync with this new progressive direction of Iceland—but also Icelandic queer radicals, a group ignored in public discourse during the research period, but as the arrest of a queer activist at the 2019 Pride Parade (discussed in Paper III) shows, it is met with disdain or even force whenever it shows its face (Papers II & III).

Here, I wish to return to the two overarching research questions: 1) Where did the Icelandic LGBTQ+ progress narrative come from? and 2) What effect has it had? First: the Icelandic LGBTQ+ progress narrative emerged out of a national identity crisis that

occurred when neoliberalism first intersected with queerness and nation in Iceland in the 1990s. Under neoliberal ideology, the state's relationship with the nation was put in question; the status of queer people who saw themselves as "sexual refugees" from the nation had to be reconsidered; and the national imaginary needed redefinition, as it had to abandon many old nationalistic traditions and viewpoints and adopt new ones. The LGBTQ+ progress narrative served a strategic function: it resolved this crisis of the national imaginary. Around it, new discourses emerged, creating a new regime of truth about Iceland as a model neoliberal nation-state, in which neoliberal governmentality regulated queerness so efficiently as to collapse some LGBTQ+ subjects into the nation, so also assuring the state's own status at the centre of the national imaginary as the giver of rights to the new, model LGBTQ+ citizens.

As for the second question, the effect of the emergence of the progress narrative was to rally the nation around neoliberal ideology which became associated with joy, progress, and the future. LGBTQ+ subjects were discursively oriented in the same progressive direction as the nation itself and so, they became not only subordinated, but subsumed under it. What has followed has been a gently forced march towards the joyous, national future, while critique, anger, memories of a radical past, and alternative possibilities for life have been left by the wayside. This was the process through which LGBTQ+ Icelanders became "more like you".

One could add another question—which is not a research question or an analytical question but a vital one nonetheless, given the emphasis I have put on utility, potentiality, and resistance in these Introductory Chapters. It is: Where to go from here? Immodestly, I believe my findings may offer some suggestions. In Paper II, I have shown how the state, over the 2000s, employed marriage equality to secure its own position in the national centre. In the process, the meaning of marriage itself changed as the frames governing it shifted and moved. However, the shifting of the norm also bred new ways to resist it. Though seldom explicated in public discourse, marriage equality means *any* couples who meet the legal requirements of age and citizenship can marry, no matter their gender identities or sexual orientations. Thus, the opportunity arises for the use of the homonormative institution of marriage for resistance against the frames of normality and nationality. Quite simply, neoliberal redefinitions of marriage were meant to widen opportunities for capital accumulation and to maintain the moral traditions of the family in an untraditional world. They were never meant to allow still-marginalized groups, such as trans people or refugees, entry into the borders of the nation through the strategic use of marriage. Perhaps a new "strange power" may be found through such tactical use of normative technologies to undermine the frames of power that created them.

In Paper III, our viewpoint shifted from the state and towards LGBTQ+ activists and their use of joy in the Reykjavík Pride Parade to gain national inclusion. This was spectacularly successful in shifting the frame in order to associate Icelandic LGBTQ+

people with life and happiness as opposed to their traditional association with unhappiness and death (through AIDS and suicide). Yet the frame quickly reconstituted itself: the national inclusion engendered by its shift associated LGBTQ+ people's joy with the joy of the nation and subordinated the former to the latter. It became tangled up with the norms it had momentarily unsettled, thus strengthening homonationalism, facilitating the erasure of the past, and consolidating the nation's borders. However, again, this joyful but subordinate subject position is neither inevitable nor inescapable. As the case of Elí, the queer activist arrested at the 2019 Pride grounds, shows, queer subjects who refuse the affective orientation towards happiness are felt to threaten the nationally joyful Parade to such an extent that its mien is disturbed and its oppressive side unmasked. Thus, the more national inclusion and neoliberal subjectivization comes to depend on joy, the easier it is for a killjoy to disturb the atmosphere through an insistence on remembering the past, an emphasis on the exclusionary character of the nation, and the display of queer anger as distinct from national joy. In this way, the frame of joy undermines itself.

In Paper IV, we see how gay men transformed themselves, through media interviews, into national, neoliberal subjects by adopting the subject position of self-transforming, past-effacing entrepreneurs. They freed the nation from any blame for past exclusions and prejudices by directing it towards themselves or other marginalized groups. Thus, they succeeded in moving the frame of nation and normality to accommodate themselves but also allowed it to exclude others, such as supposedly homophobic immigrants or radical, anti-neoliberal queers. Here, again, opportunities for resistance may emerge from the movement of the frame. As the political winds in the West blow the far right into positions of ever more power, the conceptual link between nationality, neoliberal self-work, entrepreneurship, the effacement of the past, and gay male identity is likely to become ever more strained. As the championing of supposedly traditional morality starts to outweigh the expansion of market logic in neoliberal thought, even regulated queerness will increasingly cease to be considered compatible with nationality, morality, and market participation. This could open up the possibility for forming new alliances between those cast out by neoliberal and nationalist ideology and the mounting of a new resistance towards the nationalist, neoliberal project itself. In short, we may be approaching a period of the rebirth of "unruly love" as a sexual-political weapon, granting its wielders the "strange power" of seeing the frames of normality, neoliberalism, and nationality for what they are: vulnerable to history.

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Original Publications

Paper I

Paper II

Paper III

Paper IV