

Cruising Norway's Queer Archives: Dialogic Co-Performativity Between the Stacks of Skeivt

Arkiv

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Abstract

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This thesis project examines Skeivt Arkiv, Norway's national queer archive at the University of Bergen Library and argues that it is best understood as a state-supported performance site where queer archival care is co-performed through mediated queer encounter. Queer theory has often framed the queer archive as a contradiction in terms: the archive fixes and categorizes, while queerness moves and exceeds. Drawing on Diana Taylor's performative pair, the "archive" and the "repertoire," and on research conducted at the archive in September 2025, this project asks how queerness and the state is similarly co-performed—by whom, for whom, with what objects of memory, and toward what future. The thesis situates Skeivt Arkiv's rapid, state-funded founding (2012–2015) against both the community-archive tradition of North America and the seductions of Norwegian exceptionalism. It then specifies the practices of queer archival care—preservation, relational, interpretive, and bodily—through which the archive

performs its work, reading them through José Esteban Muñoz's disidentification, Elizabeth Freeman's erotohistoriography, and the dialogic co-performance of Dwight Conquergood and D. Soyini Madison, before turning to the linguistic capaciousness of the name *Skeivt arkiv* itself. Its methodological contribution, co-cruising, extends Simon Ofield's and Steven Paige's work on cruising the archive by relocating cruising from a solitary practice of detection to a dialogic co-performance among researcher, archivist, and object. The method is tested on six objects from the collection. The thesis concludes that Skeivt Arkiv becomes *skeiv* not through its holdings but through its performances, keeping queer history open to encounters—and futures—that are not yet here.

Introduction: Bent Memory

It was an overcast morning at the University of Bergen, typical of both Bergen and my current hometown, Seattle, Washington. I walked up the hill from my apartment during the next week and a half, just south of campus. The building's glass double doors led me into a hallway. On the door to my right, I noted a small, printed sign bearing the font and logo of the website I had studied back at the University of Washington: Skeivt Arkiv.¹ I had traveled to Norway on a departmental grant to do research for this thesis. I was broadly interested in learning more about Norway's national queer archive, and I had been developing a method for performance ethnography. Beyond that, I did not come with a hypothesis to confirm or a list of boxes to request from the archive. I arrived with a question I could not yet phrase, and with a willingness to let the archive ask its own.

At the end of the hallway, under a stairwell, was a modest single door that required a key card to tap in. I passed the Humanities café and student lounge and considered a cup of coffee before remembering I was entering an archive. Best wait until I know the rules, I thought. Already, before I had crossed the threshold, the archive had begun to choreograph the movements of my body: what I could carry, where I could go, what I should want. I rang the digital doorbell affixed to the wall next to the archive's entrance, and after a minute or so, a friendly person with tied-back hair wearing a sweater and glasses came to the door. It appeared as though I may have interrupted her work, but she didn't seem fazed, as if this was part of the job: pausing and getting up to open the door when the bell rings. I told them that I was expecting to chat with Runar Jordåen. They let me in.

¹ Per Norwegian capitalization rules, the archive styles its own name "Skeivt arkiv," with a lowercase a. The logo itself uses a thin, black, sans serif stenciled font, all in capital letters; the A uses an extended forward slash [/] in place of its left side. For this thesis, I will format the name as a proper noun in English, with both words capitalized: Skeivt Arkiv. On the term *skeiv* itself, see Part Three.

I was led first into a common sitting area, warm, softly lit, and visually calm. Couches with verdant upholstery, ochre wood, an area with a large meeting table, a few small vitrines with tiny objects like pins and photos, large bookshelves that surround the walls, stacks of books, scattered journals. This room leans toward familiarity rather than monumentality. I expected something closer to the institutional archives I had visited back home: fluorescent, procedural, cluttered. My first impression here, however, was that I had walked into a waiting room, like at a doctor's office—but gayer. It was professional, of course, but I couldn't help but feel like I was going to be taken care of, or that I would soon enjoy curling up and reading a book here if I were a student. In the back, to the right, there is a room with tables. I later learned that this was the reading room. Offices surrounded the back wall and the area to my right. But the sitting area is where a visitor lands first, and it is also where this thesis begins.

Perhaps the most striking objects in the sitting area did not immediately announce themselves as such. Jordåen and I made our introductions near the couches, and I kept being distracted by a homemade denim vest decorated with full-sized teddy bears. I thought, this must be from something with Bamseklubben, the organization for gay bears or burly hairy men for whom Bergen's "Teddy Bear Club" is named. Emailing with Runar later, my guess was confirmed—a Bamseklubben member wore the vest during an Oslo Pride parade—it had been worn in public celebration. It now hung in semi-public rest, still faintly performing. "So, tell me a bit about your research," Runar asked, in Norwegian.

I explained that I'm interested in how Skeivt Arkiv and its archivists perform Norwegian queerness, and that I'm open to learning and contributing more. When I attempted to describe this project to Norwegians, I sensed polite uneasiness, as if the word *skeiv* [queer] implied an accusation or as if performance studies lacked rigor or a quantifiable outcome. Runar, however,

seemed to lean into it. Upon reflection, I like to think that he enjoyed showing me what he thought were the archive's greatest hits—sharing his work with someone who hadn't yet arrived at a hypothesis. In fact, what happened next became the methodological heart of this project. Because I had not told the archive what I was looking for, Runar—and later his colleague Bjørn André Widvey—took me down into the archive rooms themselves and walked me around, showing me the things they found interesting, lingering on a combination of what they thought I would be interested in, and the objects that stood out to them. Neither of us was entirely directing the encounter, exactly. Or rather, both of us were co-directing. Only months later did I find language for what we had been doing. I now see it as a sort of cruising the archive—perhaps more specifically, co-cruising the archive—a term that I continue to unpack. The method for this project was given to me by the archive before I had a name for it.

Just beyond the *bamse*-vest stood two chairs. They blended into the room's color scheme well enough that, without being told, a visitor could easily mistake them for part of the seating—well, almost. In contrast to the room's spare, functionalist furniture, these two were ornate: acanthus-carved, stitched with rococo flowers, upholstered with evident age. And they were cordoned off.

Runar was casual and kind, but adamant that I shouldn't sit in these particular chairs. They belonged to Kim Friele. Karen-Christine “Kim” Friele (1935–2021) is the closest thing Norwegian queer history has to a household name. She is the leading figure, through the organization Det Norske Forbundet av 1948 (DNF-48), in the campaign that removed §213—the paragraph criminalizing sex between men—from the penal code in 1972, and a continuing presence in Norwegian public life for the five decades that followed (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 12). Friele's name can be seen all over queer spaces in Bergen and throughout Norway.

She is, by any measure, a star, and her 2012 donation of her personal archive became the founding collection of Skeivt Arkiv itself (Gillow-Kloster and Jordåen 297). And here were her chairs, just sitting there in the middle of the sitting room, as if they were part of the decor. Connected to Friele, the chairs exceeded their functional purpose as furniture, directing a greater scene of staged access to history. I eyed them with excited fan-girl energy. I could approach them, look at them, imagine occupying them—mere centimeters away from sitting where Kim once sat. I could imagine their former owner in them: they exude class and pedigree, the kind of chairs one sits in with a straighter back and crossed ankles, a delicate cup of coffee in a saucer. No longer used for sitting, they had graduated to a different purpose and retired from their previous one. Their presence in the sitting room at Skeivt Arkiv preserved a ghost of Kim Friele in her absence: she sits in each chair for anyone who remembers her—near, but not available. The chairs perform a nuanced slippage between access and foreclosure, function and exhibition, liveliness and deathliness. They became a domestic remnant of their previous owner, now in the care of state institutions—the state that she sought to change.

I lean on the memory of these chairs now, because they staged the problem this project sets out to think through. As I write, I am tuning in to the past and the futurity concentrated within them. There is state power: the chairs sit inside a national archive funded through the Norwegian state budget and housed at a public university, an institutional descendant of the same state that had ² criminalized Friele and her community until 1972 and continued to classify it as mental illness until 1977. There is the fixity of preservation: the withheld yet apparent access, the requirement that the chairs remain as they are so that they may last. There is desire: my pull

² Sex between women was not criminalized in Norway. Runar Jordåen wrote the following in an article for *Skeivopedia*, Skeivt Arkiv's wiki: "DNF-48 feared that the provision [criminalizing male homosexuality] was being replaced with a new rule defining a higher age of consent for homosexuality than for heterosexuality. [...] such a law would probably have been used extensively, as it seemed obvious that it would affect both lesbians and gay men."

toward them, my wish to touch, the small thrill of proximity. There is performance: the repetition, the warning and heeding, the knowledge I hold in my body about how to proceed—choreography between bodies and an object, bodies and an institution, without which the chairs would communicate nothing in particular. And there is futurity: the chairs aren't kept for Friele or her family, who no longer need them, and they're not really kept just for me but also for visitors and scholars who seek to understand a past in a queer future that is not yet here. The keywords of this thesis—archive, queer, performance, care, cruising, futurity—transcend my abstract and their search functionality just as they extend beyond how the chairs sat in that room, upholstered in rococo flowers next to a printer and a bookshelf.

Terms, or the Problem of Binaries

Throughout this project, I have battled a common sense, assumed binary between the terms archive and queer. In contention with myself, I must recognize that they are not necessarily at odds, after all. Given the archive's name, which bears both terms in translation, the tension between the terms must be unpacked with care for both the localization of the terms themselves and the connection between them in the choice to identify as such. I admit that I will spend more time localizing queer/*skeiv* than I will the more or less cognates archive/*arkiv*.

For my argument, I will use archive/*arkiv* in a mostly institutional sense, without ignoring the haunted nature these institutions hold within Western ideals of colonization, progress, and equality. I will often defer to the term's typical usage as an organized body of preserved documents and objects, with the protocols that keep them retrievable. The word also bears some theoretical freight. In *Archive Fever* (1995), Jacques Derrida traced the word to the Greek *arkhē*, which names both commencement and commandment. The archive begins with the archons, the keepers and creators of the archive, who housed official documents (in the name of

colonization) and held “the power to interpret the archives” (Derrida 9–10). For Derrida, the archive is not a neutral container. Along with its objects, an archive maintains a legal, spatial, and interpretive authority. The archive is driven by an incessant fear of destruction and forgetting, which means every act of preservation anticipates the future loss it is built against (Derrida 19). An archive is an institution that runs on anxiety about the future while claiming to contain the past. Skeivt Arkiv, as I see it, runs on hopeful anticipation rather than anxious dread.

“Queer” is a slippery wicket, one that has caused tomes of contemplation on how words fail to encompass or define its meaning and the meaning of the ever-changing and undefinable nature of what it seeks to define. In my usage, I tend to follow the field that coalesced in the early 1990s around Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and others. Queer is not a fixed identity category but a positioning against the normative alignments of sex, sexuality, gender, and desire: “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances” produced “when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (Sedgwick 8). I use queer as both an adjective and a verb: one can queer a text, a space, an institution. Whether Norwegian *skeiv* can do the same is a question Part Three takes up at length, because the term’s translation turns out to be theoretically generative. When I write queer/ed, with a slash, I intend to mark moments where the word’s adjectival and participial senses are both alive—where something or someone is queer and has been made queer, by a person or by a majoritized public that named its/their deviance into being.³

³ I adopt this convention from Steven Paige’s article “Cruising the Archive: Discovering a Queer Methodology,” which I discovered as I began theorizing this project. An item may be queer (created by a queer author and/or containing queer topics) and queered (produced inside a diagnostic that treats queerness as an object of study). The slash holds both meanings.

The effort to exceed a binary remains a problem throughout this thesis. The archive fixes, flattens, and stills; queerness moves, exceeds, and refuses that same stillness; therefore, a queer archive becomes a persistent contradiction in terms, and the best a queer archive can do is manage that contradiction. Versions of this argument circulate widely in queer theory, and Skeivt Arkiv's founder engaged directly with this conundrum at its founding. Tone Hellesund (citing Mathias Danbolt's reading of queer archival discourses) notes that queer theory's understanding of sexuality as "heterogeneous" and "indeterminate" challenges archival logics of categorization, such that a queer archive "may seem like a contradiction in terms" (Danbolt qtd. in Hellesund 111). The argument suggests a binary, and it does not stand up to the room I have just described, nor to the archive I visited.

Diana Taylor, a performance studies scholar from New York University, provides a conceptual pair that this project will work with and against. Her book, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003) emerged from archival and performance studies in the Americas, questioning how memory is transferred under colonialism. Taylor distinguishes Derrida's archive—"supposedly enduring materials"—from the repertoire: embodied practice and knowledge—"performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing"—which require embodied presence to transmit memory between bodies (19–20). Performance "functions as an epistemology" and embodied practice "offers a way of knowing" (Taylor 3). Taylor's theatrical pair may be most easily read as binary opposites, but archival objects are not as stable as institutions claim because they are mediated and reinterpreted by embodied repertoire. But the repertoire is not the archive's opposite. Instead, they are necessary partners; the two "exist in a constant state of interaction," each exceeding the other's limitations (Taylor 19–21). An archive without repertoire is illegible. A repertoire without an archive is

precarious. Therefore, their relationship is not queer/ed or straight/ened, bodily repertoire versus archival object, but mutually dependent upon one another. The creation is in excess of both of these terms.

I will begin with Taylor's conundrum and take off toward a queer/ed understanding of what history can do with this capacious freight of defining and storing that which has not yet arrived. One needs a repertoire to access an archive: I could not have read Friele's chairs as I did without an embodied respect for its owner, without heeding my rehearsed repertoire of conduct in archival spaces, and without the curated tour and archival care of an archivist. The question remains not whether queerness and this state archive can coexist as fighting oppositional pairs, but how their interdependence is performed, by whom, for whom, with what objects of memory, and toward what future.

I draw on a performance-ethnographic method in which everyday performances define culture and the stakes of continued encounter: the ethnographer studying is blurred with the interlocutor being studied, so that both co-create a scene of discovery—the culture creating is also part of the culture in creation, and the world created is also creating new worlds.⁴ Skeivt Arkiv's distinctiveness lies not primarily in what it holds but in how it stages holding—through practices I group under the heading of queer archival care, and through a mode of encounter I theorize, from my own fieldwork, as cruising the archive.

This argument unfolds across five parts. Part One reviews the history of the institution. Skeivt Arkiv emerged in 2012–2015 from a crucial absence in Norwegian historical memory. Its

⁴ Concepts of the dialogic in performance ethnography, and of co-performative witnessing between researcher and interlocutor, were defined by Dwight Conquergood and developed by D. Soyini Madison and others; they are extended by Dorinne Kondo's formulations of worldmaking and were introduced to me by Jasmine Jamillah Mahmoud as I developed my own approach to performance ethnography. My understanding of this dialogic is not unrelated to Augusto Boal's call, following Bertolt Brecht, for a Theatre of the Oppressed that breaks down the tradition of stage and spectator to create a living stage of "spect-actors" who both create the staged scene and inter/act with it.

founders chose a state-supported university home for the national queer archive rather than taking a more common community-archive route, thereby positioning the archive within the very state structures that once regulated queer life. This history is also created along the pitfalls of Norwegian exceptionalism, the national self-narrative of progressive triumph that a queer archive both benefits from and must resist. Part Two builds a theoretical base. I argue that an archive of queer life is an archive of the performative, and that storing the performative requires labors of repetition and return. I then specify some of the practices of queer archival care through which Skeivt Arkiv performs that labor. Part Three returns to language. The archive's name holds *skeiv* and queer together as simultaneously overlapping, historically distinct, and mutually illuminating terms that point toward a queer futurity. Part Four develops cruising as a method: a short history of cruising and its stakes, an account of the scholars who have brought cruising into the archive before me, and my own intervention—co-cruising—which relocates cruising from a solitary practice of detection to a dialogic co-performance with archivists. Part Five tests the method on objects from Skeivt Arkiv, and the conclusion follows those objects toward queer futurity.

Part One: Born(e) queer

A national archive promises order. It gathers items and documents, records their provenance, and makes categories for them. Researchers may return to them with the same protocols—a practical promise for a practical purpose. As with many survival tools, though, the wielder of these protocols is often granted a lion's share of power over their protectorate. As I established in the introduction, drawing on Derrida and Taylor, the guards of an archive hold the power to interpret it, and the performative arrangements of these archives are shaped by the

repertoires within the bodies that curate and disseminate them. Archives are built by people and institutions, and they carry the desires of those people and institutions. These archons make decisions on behalf of: what may count as evidence, whose stories are worth preserving, which names become searchable, and which forms of knowledge are deemed too minor, too painful, or too embarrassing to keep. Archivists determine “what the future will know about its past” and “who will have a continuing voice” (Terry Cook qtd. in Gillow-Kloster and Jordåen 294). The archive is a future-making machine, and its decisions become the conditions under which later researchers imagine the past. The archive is a future-making machine, and its decisions become the conditions through which later researchers imagine the past.

Skeivt Arkiv emerged because Norwegian queer history had been scattered, fragile, and unevenly valued. Tone Hellesund, a professor of cultural studies at the University of Bergen and the person who launched the idea for the archive, observed that “hardly any archives or museums had undertaken any systematic efforts to collect materials from queer history” (117). From a non-queer perspective, it may seem that plenty has been said about LGBT issues in Norway, but as Hellesund notes, “from a queer perspective, the conversation and research here has hardly begun” (117). A society can talk constantly about queer people while failing to preserve queer lives.

The editors of *Skeiv lokalhistorie* (2022)—the first research-based anthology on specifically local queer history in Norway, co-edited by Dag Hundstad, Hellesund, and Runar Jordåen (11)—give this double absence a useful spatial vocabulary. Seen *ovenfra*, from above, queer history in Norway “handler ... om kirkens, myndighetenes (Lovverket) og medisinenes forståelser av og tiltak mot kjønnsoverskridelser og sammekjønnsseksualitet” [is about the church’s, the authorities’ (the legal system’s), and medicine’s understandings of and measures

against gender transgressions and same-sex sexuality] (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 11; my translation). The view from above yields a timescape of regulation. Before 1842, sex “against nature” could be punished by fire—*bål og brann*—though the editors note that, as far as is known, no one in Norway was executed for sex with someone of the same gender (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 11). From 1902, §213 of the penal code criminalized sex between men, which remained law until 1972, when it fell after decades of organized work by Det Norske Forbundet av 1948 (DNF-48; now called FRI: foreningen for kjønns- og seksualitetsmangfold or the Norwegian Organization for Sexual and Gender Diversity) (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 12). Homosexuality was removed from the Norwegian Psychiatric Association’s list of mental disorders in 1977 (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 12). These dates matter to Norwegian queer history like a connect-the-dots puzzle: orienting and incomplete, an outline without color or dimension. When queer history is told only through legal reform, state recognition can pass for a complete measurement of queer life—or rather, apparently sufficient as one. A historiographic problem for any narrative of queer Norwegianness.

So the editors turn to history *nedenfra*, from below: “Ser vi skeiv historie nedenfra, blir bildet noe annerledes” [If we look at queer history from below, the picture becomes something different] (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 12; my translation). From below, one finds local variation, tacit arrangements, coded possibility, and forms of life that do not line up with official categories. Local norms could discipline queer life, but the local community could also appear as a *mulighetsrom*—the editors’ term, meaning a “space of possibility”—“ikke bare som en arena for undertrykking og kontroll” [not just as an arena for oppression and control] (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 12; my translation). Official records preserve the majoritized voices of power. A truly queer/ed archive must learn to preserve other kinds of evidence that exceed the

limits of institutional power. Building a queer, nationally recognized and supported archive in Norway meant building an institution that could hold both the view from above and the view from below without letting the first organize the second.

What kind of institution should hold such a history? Here, Skeivt Arkiv's founders made a choice that distinguishes it from other international queer archives. Namely, it was a part of the state from its inception. In the United States, many queer archives began as community projects, built on a distrust of state and official institutions. The Lesbian Herstory Archives, founded in 1974 and housed for decades in a Brooklyn apartment, refused state funding on principle. The ONE Archives in Los Angeles and the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco grew out of activist collections before they affiliated with state institutions. Kristine Olsen Myren, in her 2023 master's thesis on Skeivt Arkiv, emphasized that rather than a community collection that later affiliated with an institution, Skeivt Arkiv was conceived from the start as an archive grounded in archival practice and theory within a university library (52).

An early monograph by Skeivt arkiv's founder, Tone Hellesund, which theorizes what she and her colleagues were creating at the outset of the project, has been invaluable for positioning this research. She wrote that Skeivt arkiv officially opened in April 2015 and received five million NOK in annual support through the national budget in November 2015 (Hellesund 112). The speed is striking. In roughly three years, it already had a national budget line. One cannot deny that speed followed decades of historical and archival absence.⁵

Why the institutional route? According to Hellesund, the choice was strategic and specific to Norway. An existing institution was the most realistic home for a national queer archive because it could provide infrastructure, stability, and legitimacy (Hellesund 117–18).

⁵ Hellesund notes that same-sex sexuality and gender-norm transgression had been taboo in Norwegian history "at least as far back as the Viking era." She defines queer history as the history of those transgressions, the people who committed or were understood to commit them, and the social reactions to them. (113).

Compared to the United States, Norway lacks a tradition of private philanthropy that has built and sustained American nonprofit community archives, so long-term survival outside similar Norwegian financial structures would have required resources that did not exist. Timing was also different. Many American LGBTQ community archives were founded in the 1970s, in the immediate wake of criminalization and at the height of activist coalition-building, while Skeivt Arkiv was founded four decades after Norwegian decriminalization, in a state that had already passed partnership recognition (1993) and marriage equality (2009). Rather than emerging from a hostile state, Skeivt Arkiv called upon support from an already friendly one.

Scholar-to-scholar, I appreciate that Hellesund and her compatriots launched Skeivt Arkiv while theorizing it. In fact, she believed that the establishment of Skeivt Arkiv was meant to contribute “empirically” to theoretical debates about queer archives (Hellesund 111). She was simultaneously building an institution and entering the scholarly argument about whether such an institution is possible. Quoting Danbolt, Hellesund writes, “queering the archive is a means to make ‘future histories’ possible,” and she likes to think of Skeivt Arkiv as “exactly such an initiative” (112). The archive was expressly built so that histories not yet written could become possible. In this initial articulation of its theoretical possibility, Hellesund theorizes a future created by the preservation of queer pasts.

Hellesund also anticipated objections. In the debate between the queer “archive of feelings” (Ann Cvetkovich, 2003) and the public research archive, she recognized the standard characterization of the latter as linear and focused on canonical events (Hellesund 122). She then points out that 1) this characterization can both misrepresent what public research archives actually are and 2) romanticize the archive of affective connection to its objects (Hellesund 122). As the state archive is not automatically straight, the community archive is not automatically

queer. But state archives have historically participated in the systems of classification, laws, and memory that made queer lives difficult to preserve on their own terms. So a state-supported queer archive is neither a contradiction nor a triumph: it is a wager. It can queer the state archive from within—but only through specifically queer (or *skeiv*) practices, not by virtue of its queer subject matter alone. Skeivt Arkiv is not queer because it contains queer materials. It rather becomes *skeiv*, through its actions.

The speed of Skeivt Arkiv's founding, as impressive as it seems, must be further contextualized within the greater progressive timeline of Norwegian LGBT legal milestones: decriminalization in 1972, depathologization in 1977, legal partnership in 1993, legal marriage in 2009, and then, within a few years, state funding for a national queer archive. Progress narratives such as these are exciting when laid out relatively to other Western states. They tend to make a straight line running from a repressive past to an enlightened present, so that the Norwegian state of Today may be perceived as settled and finally accepting. This perception can make earlier queer-phobias harder to remember and present-day queer-phobias harder to recognize. Nordic historians Heta Hyttinen and Íris Ellenberger argue that queer historical work in the region must actively challenge this “conventional progress narrative” (9). Their 2026 article frames queer history as an “active intellectual intervention” into national narratives that recognize only binary gender and heteronormative sexuality (Hyttinen and Ellenberger 9). Nordic gender-rights exceptionalism is the conviction that Norway is exceptionally “good” at gender rights and that its present legal statutes may somehow represent an arrival at gender utopia rather than a queer process of understanding gender. Queer rights, and importantly, women's rights, have become load-bearing elements of this national self-image, even as intersectionally minoritized people remain outside. In Norwegian immigration debates, foreign policy, and asylum deliberations, for

example, tolerance may carry caveats that mark others—often non-white and Muslim others—as queerly against the accepted progressive national “us.”⁶

Part Two: Queer archival care

Care for archival lives is central to queer archival practice. In Skeivt Arkiv, care is a set of performances. *Preservation* care can include climate control, cataloging, digitization, description, repair, and storage. *Relational* care may include building trust with donors, accepting materials, conducting oral histories, welcoming visitors, answering questions, and refusing the assumption that queer life becomes valuable only when attached to famous names. There is *interpretive* care: choosing how to display an object once it is taken out of its resting place, how to explain a painful legal history without reducing queer history to a history of oppression, how to let humor and eroticism remain present, how to keep the messy parts without dulling or glossing over their impact. There is *bodily* care: how to touch, how not to touch, when to use gloves, and when coffee has to stay outside the room. Following Taylor, a practice becomes a performance when it is repeated, embodied, and witnessed—when it transmits social knowledge and memory between bodies as an “act of transfer” (2–3). Cataloging done once, alone, is a practice; cataloging as a rehearsed institutional behavior that stores and historicizes queerness for a nation, that rehearses how queer life can be stored and cared for, is a performance.

⁶ Homonationalism, which I connect to Jasbir Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), analyzes this dynamic, and Scandinavian scholarship has traced this, especially in recent years. A full treatment of these discourses in Scandinavia exceeds this thesis, but the questions it raises for Skevit Arkiv flag the ways in which a national/ized queer archive holds power in constructing an identity for its constituents, especially as they seek to promote or celebrate the successes of some at the cost of the others. Given the whiteness of the archive’s documented holdings and of the field around it (see Part Three on Olsen Myren’s findings and my own positionality), queerness is skewed as a white-centric futurity based on the uneven collections.

Queer archival care involves a minoritarian practice called disidentification. In his book, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), José Esteban Muñoz described a set of “survival strategies” by which minoritarian subjects negotiate a “phobic majoritarian public sphere” that punishes those who do not conform to normative citizenship (4). Disidentification is a third strategy between assimilation and refusal, identification and counteridentification, working on dominant structures from within, “recycling or re-forming an object that has already been invested with powerful energy” (Muñoz, *Disidentifications* 39). Engaging Eve Sedgwick, Muñoz writes that “to perform queerness is to constantly disidentify, to constantly find oneself thriving on sites where meaning does not properly ‘line up’” (*Disidentifications* 78). Skeivt Arkiv draws on the stability of the University of Bergen library and the Norwegian state budget to promise a co-signed legibility while hosting items and repertoire that do not quite align with older national historical archives. Skeivt Arkiv thereby enters into a disidentificatory relation with these institutions, using *the form that holds power* to preserve materials that previous institutions of power had otherwise *not cared to keep*.

The archive’s collection strategy shows how Hellesund understood queer archival care as a practical problem. She writes that the materials already received included buttons, T-shirts, posters, videos, cassettes, banners, and even a box of dental dams, and that the archive sought to collect “all kinds of material” that could shed light on queer lives (Hellesund 123). Buttons and banners preserve public activism. Videos and cassettes preserve media and voice. T-shirts preserve politics worn on the body. Dental dams—a particular favorite of Hellesund’s—preserve sexual culture, public health, erotic practice, and the practical materiality of safer sex. The archive’s capaciousness shows a conscious decision to let queer life enter the archive as life.

How, then, should a researcher meet such materials? Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010) offers a possible answer in the method she calls "erotohistoriography": a way of encountering the past that "uses the body as a tool" and sees the body "as a method" (95–96). Freeman asks the archival interlocutor to notice how historical consciousness happens through embodied sensation (96). The desire to sit in Kim Friele's chairs and to imagine her in them is, in itself, data—the object and I are in a staged relation between preservation and access, among other performances. A queer archive is full of materials that reach a researcher not only as information but as sensation. To ignore sensation and affect would not produce objectivity; it would simply conceal one mode of relation under another name (Freeman 120). Archival feeling makes room for the evidence to be encountered through bodies with training—a repertoire.

I approach minoritarian care ethnographically. Anthropologist and professor emerita of Performance Studies and African Studies at Northwestern University, D. Soyini Madison, in *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*, sees the researcher as a "performative witness" within a "body-to-body" field site and treats method as "open-ended yet precise, contingent yet resilient" (21). Madison commits to "deep listening and engagement," where evidence remains inseparable from the ethics of representing a social world (16). Her dialogic takes off from her Northwestern colleague, ethnographer Dwight Conquergood, whose concept of dialogic co-performance became a cornerstone of Performance Ethnography as a field. In *Cultural Struggles*, Conquergood theorized relationships between theory and practice, and between the researcher and the interlocutor (44). In E. Patrick Johnson's introduction to this monograph, Conquergood's dialogic performance is described as an ethnographic method in which the researcher and the researched are both "implicated in the meaning-making process,"

and in which the researcher must remain accountable for the circumstances under which knowledge is produced (8). If the objects in the Skeivt Arkiv contain lives via a repertoire of repeated performances, then the object and the researcher are co-performing and co-witnessing dialogically—always mediated by archivists, institutions, and one's own repertoire.

Interpretive care is most visible in the archive's public-facing work, where mediation may extend further into the Norwegian public sphere, as curated access to the collection. Hellesund foregrounds, *Skeivopedia*, the archive's online encyclopedia wiki, which began from the discovery that much knowledge of queer lives was fragile. She asks who would know what groups like *Soperliga'n* or *Flammefronten*⁷ were if the knowledge were not written down (Hellesund 123). *Skeivopedia*'s function extends beyond marketing and outreach to encompass preservation technology for organizations, queer slang and terminology, and digital presence. It also raises questions about genre. Is an encyclopedia entry an archival object, a finding aid, a public history exhibit, a digital monument, a pedagogical tool, or an invitation to further donation? Dagmar Brunow, a Swedish film studies scholar working on mediated memory and documentary archives, notes that cultural memory is always mediated, dependent on available media technologies, formats, and aesthetic patterns (3), and remediation is a movement against forgetting—a way of moving archival material from shelf-bound storage into circulation as functional memory (15). *Skeivopedia*, digitized sources, and oral-history excerpts move archival traces into public routes of encounter. But each route still frames the object.

⁷ These are two lesser-known Norwegian queer organizations of the late twentieth century that Hellesund names directly in her article whose memory now survives largely through documentation efforts like *Skeivopedia*. *Soperliga'n* (The Broom League) was an organization which departed from the DNF-48 organization in 1979 which *Soperliga'n* founders viewed as increasingly conservative and concerned with being "*som folk flest*" [like most people]. Celebrating difference from homonormativity and demonstrating humorously was their main intent (*Skeivopedia/soperligan*). *Flammefronten*'s entry is more sparse: "The *Flammefronten* [The Flame Front] group was the lesbian car club at Kvinnehuset [The Women's House] in Oslo in the period around 1980" (my translation; *Skeivopedia/flammefronten*).

The archive's oral history program shows relational and interpretive care converging in a single, recognizable act. When her article was published in 2016, just after Skeivt Arkiv officially opened, Hellesund contended that one of the archive's most urgent tasks was to collect oral histories, because the activists who established Norway's first lesbian and gay organization around 1950 were aging or had already died (124). The video interviews, currently led by archivist Bjørn André Widvey—who also leads much of the work on Skeivopedia—remain a key part of the archive today. Oral history is archival care in repertory form: a living person transmits memory through performance—storytelling with voice, pace, expression, gesture—within a dialogic encounter. Once edited into a short video excerpt, that memory becomes both archival media and embodied transmission. A three-to-five-minute reel can invite viewers into a life, but it also mediates that life through selection and framing. Care here is both preservation and editing.

Part Three: Linguistic capaciousness, queer acceptance

Skeivt arkiv translates to English as “queer archive,” and for most purposes, the translation serves its purpose. But *skeiv* and queer are not one-to-one versions of each other. They are related terms with distinct histories, grammars, and relationships to their usage and meanings. *Skeiv* and queer are similar and different in their trajectories. The differences illuminate what the archive does.

My own positionality in this analysis must be marked, since the reading that follows is related to my own experiences and repertoire. I write (non-exhaustively, but as relevant to this argument) as a queer-identifying, male-assigned-at-birth, married, HIV+, middle-class, white American descended from settler-colonizers; the people I spoke with in and around Skeivt Arkiv

were, moreover, nearly all white, gay, and male. The narrowness of that field—mine and the archive’s—returns at the end of this section.

Linguistically, the old, traditional, straight rigidity of *arkiv* is fascinating as a counterpoint to the new, reclaimed, crooked pride of *skeiv*. In their book *Skeiv på norsk: jakten på et ord og en identitet* [*Skeiv in Norwegian: The Search for a Word and an Identity*] (2025), Lars Helge Frivold and Kristen Fridtun describe *skeiv* as a hotly debated word in Norway, one that is defined, redefined, embraced, and rejected (9; my translation). Reengaging a by-now-old debate in queer studies, they ask whether it is a strength or a weakness that the term is so capacious, and whether it matters that *skeiv* can be read as the negative counterpart to *rett*, meaning 'straight' or 'right' (Frivold and Fridtun 9). Their book tests common theories of how *skeiv* became slang for norm-breaking sexuality and gender—that it derives from *Keiva*, a nickname for *Venstres Hus* in Oslo, a building connected to both Women’s and LGBTQ political movements in Norway, or that it was simply a translation of the reclaimed English term *queer*. They conclude that neither explanation alone gives a full answer (Frivold and Fridtun 9–10). My intent is not to settle this etymological debate but to recognize that *skeiv*’s linguistic ambiguity is methodologically productive for Norway’s formulation of a queer archive.

Beyond its usage among *skeiv*-identifying people and in queer studies, *skeiv* can mean slanted, crooked, wrong, or askew. Norwegian archivists warn against transferring terms across time periods.⁸ For example, *sodomitt* [sodomite] belongs to an era of religious and legal condemnation, *homofil* [homophile, used now as a translation for homosexual] belongs to the medical and rights discourses of the twentieth century, and *skeiv* is now used as an umbrella term

⁸ For a considerable examination of terms used by and against queer people throughout Norway and its history, I direct readers to Runar Jordåen’s *Skeivopedia* entry, “*Tvitoling og båing: Kjønnsoverskriding i norsk språkhistorie*” [“*Tvitoling and Båing: Gender Transcendence in Norwegian Linguistic History*”]: *Skeivopedia/tvitoling-og-baing-kjonnsverskriding-i-norsk-sprakhistorie*.

for diverse practices and identities tied to same-sex relations and gender transgression (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 11). While *arkiv* often suggests order, custody, and retrievability, *skeiv* introduces slant, misalignment, and excess. The simply named Queer Archive, in its Norwegian form, holds the proverbial closet open—for newness, and for historical materials to be gathered without forcing them into present identity categories. It even leaves room for lives that were never named by the alphabet of identities available in their context or time, but that can be approached through queer or *skeiv* historical inquiry. A term like LGBT can be clarifying for contemporary rights discourse, but it becomes anachronistic when applied backward onto a life that never personally or publicly defined itself as such. A term like *skeiv* permits methodological caution, allowing a researcher to ask how same-sex relations, gender transgression, erotic ambiguity, local rumor, or bodily nonconformity appeared in a given context without assuming that modern identity terms were available or desired—a crooked bridge between past and present.

The grammatical form of the title is worth noting, too. The founders branded the archive in the indefinite rather than the definite form: not *Det skeive arkivet* [the queer archive], and not *Det norske skeive arkivet* [the Norwegian queer archive]—just *Skeivt arkiv*. In Norwegian, definiteness is visible in the noun itself (*arkivet* would mark “the archive,” while *arkiv* remains open). It is reflected in the adjective that describes that noun (in the indefinite form, *skeiv* takes an ending agreeing with the gender of its noun—queerly, *arkiv* is neuter, so *skeiv* becomes *skeivt*). The difference may be partly linguistic economy; proper names often tidy grammar for public usability. Using the definite can impart a grandeur—*Det Kongelige slott* [The Royal Palace]—that perhaps seemed unbecoming. Still, I read the omission of the definite article as part of the archive’s mood—an openness. A definite title can sound like possession or completion, as

if Norwegian queer history had found its authorized container. The indefinite title sits more lightly. It leaves room for other queer archives; it does not claim to be the total queer archive but offers an opening for queer archival work. It does not promise that the institution will hold everything; it promises a practice of holding open. It is striking, in the same spirit, that the archive does not formally call itself a national archive, even as it effectively functions as one and is funded by public money—a refusal of completion built into the brand.

The spelling "*skeiv*," rather than "*skjev*," also carries history. Hellesund glosses *skeiv* as “bent” and notes its increasing use by younger LGBT people as a broad umbrella term (114). Dictionary etymologies connect the Bokmål spelling of *skeiv*, “*skjev*” to Old Norse *skeifr*, bent or crooked (NAOB, “*skjev*”). The spelling itself remains a lingering question in this research: *skeiv* is the spelling associated with nynorsk, the less widely used of Norway’s two official written standards, while the more common Bokmål standard uses *skjev*, and I could not find definitive information on why the Nynorsk-associated spelling prevailed in the queer context. Frivold and Fridtun document that *skeiv* was attested as slang for homofil by 1973 and gained wider visibility in 1980–81 through Trøndelag Teater’s production of Martin Sherman’s *Bent*, titled *Skeiv* in the regional dialect, and the press coverage surrounding it (26–31, 82). The word’s provenance is not straightforward—fitting, for an archive built around materials as *skeive* as its name.

The openness of the name extends into the archive’s practice of collecting. Gillow-Kloster and Jordåen describe a “particularly inclusive and user-shaped approach” to what counts as queer history: “So far, we have welcomed whatever objects, documents, or collections [which are] deemed to belong in a queer archive by their creators or guardians” (296). When I visited in September of 2025, the archive had still not turned away a single donation, meaning

queer people in Norway are not only the subjects preserved by the archive but also active participants in defining what Norwegian queerness can look like in archival form.

The archivists still hold institutional power, of course, and they can refuse materials. But the user-shaped approach gives unusually wide berth to what may be deemed queer enough to enter the national collection. Skeivt Arkiv is created not only for queer Norwegians but also by them, through the cumulative act of someone deciding that this object—however trivial it might seem—belongs, because it represents queer life to them. That is a radically queer sense of belonging playing out in a space usually governed by trained curators and institutional classification. Skeivt Arkiv answers the historical silence Hellesund named through a state-supported institution—akin to those that had long regulated, pathologized, and ignored Norwegian queerness—while letting queer donors help define what deserves to be kept. At the same time, so capacious a term can blur differences. It can make lesbian history, trans history, bisexual history, intersex history, rural queer history, queer immigrant history, disabled queer history, and Sámi or Indigenous queer histories seem more unified—and make Skeivt Arkiv feel more inclusive—than its holdings actually are. Olsen Myren's thesis draws attention to exactly this problem of skewed distribution, asking whether the archive's content is dominated by white men and whether women have donated as much as men (Olsen Myren). Her critique of the holdings and my positionality statement above are different, but they converge on the same caution: as I noted, the scholarship surrounding Skeivt Arkiv and the people who work in and around it today do not yet reflect the diversity the term *skeiv* invites. The term is welcoming and encompassing, but welcome does not, by itself, produce even representation.

Kim Friele, whom I introduced in the opening pages through her chairs, provided the initial donations for Skeivt Arkiv to begin its collections. National memory often prefers the

heroic, and her papers gave the archive a public origin story tied to national activism.

Gillow-Kloster and Jordåen describe the 2012 seminar on queer history and culture at which Friele announced that she wished to donate her “sizeable archive of Norwegian lesbian and gay activist history” to the University of Bergen, a donation that “became the first collection in what would become Skeivt arkiv” (297). The archive certainly preserves those heroic materials. But its queer force lies in its refusal to stop there. When I visited, I intentionally explained that my research was as yet undefined—and in the stacks, both the archivists and I were drawn to objects that signal a collection principle valuing minor materials as evidence of major life (Hellesund 123). The same principle animates the archive’s public dissemination of archived information. The founding of Skeivt Arkiv therefore belongs to a longer struggle over who defines queerness in Norway, and its name, grammar, and collecting practice all mark that the definition should stay open.

Part Four: Cruising the Archive as Method

Cruising refers to a queer practice of moving through space, reading signs, and pursuing contact without assuming in advance where contact will happen or what it will mean. In its most familiar usage, it describes the search for sexual partners in public and semi-public space, like parks, streets, toilets, bathhouses, piers, bars, and now the location-based interfaces of apps like Grindr and Sniffies. In “Haunted Sex: Queer Art and the Spectral Politics of Cruising,” David O’Mullane defines cruising as “the queer cultural practice of seeking out and identifying potential sexual partners in public space.” Criminalization and surveillance forced queer people, overwhelmingly men seeking men, to develop “visual or verbal codes” that could signal desire privately in public (O’Mullane 2–3). In “Cruising Risk, Surviving Desire,” Daren Fowler, a film

and queer studies scholar, describes the resulting skill set as a “complicated and knowing process of signs, gestures, glances, and pauses,” a “kinesthetic desiring knowledge of space, another, and one’s self” (Fowler 427–28). “Kinesthetic desiring knowledge” names a form of “bodily knowing,” which runs on desire, and reads environments. In this way, cruising is already an epistemology. It is a repertoire, learned by doing, transmitted from body to body.

I will point to three structural features of cruising that will help me map this method. First, the public/private fold. O’Mullane, drawing on David Bell and David Getsy, notes that cruising is routinely called public sex even though participants often experience it as intensely private—a “performance of the private in public” that historically depended on avoiding the uninvited public rather than staging anything for it (O’Mullane 3). “Cruising grounds” are semi-secret places built inside public space by shared codes. Public to those who can read, invisible to those who cannot. Second, surveillance. The practice evolved under hostile surveillance (from police and gay bashers, for example) and its codes are shaped as much by the watcher as by the desired. Third, risk mediated by consent. Cruising’s bodily repertoire is a technology of consent, developed in part because the stakes of misreading could be catastrophic.

Cruising has a Norwegian history, and, like Skeivt Arkiv, Norwegian historiography has begun preserving it. Throughout the §213 era (1902–1972), when sex between men was criminal, Norwegian cities, as in urban Europe and the United States, developed an infrastructure for coded public intimacy in parks, harbor areas, and public toilets—in Norwegian slang, *pissoarer*—to name just a few examples. One site in Oslo has achieved a strange immortality. At Olaf Ryes Plass in the neighborhood of Grünerløkka stands a circular cast-iron *pissoar* of the late nineteenth-century type, known in queer Oslo vernacular as Kjærlighetskarusellen [the carousel of love] for its decades of service as a cruising ground. Today, the structure is a protected cultural

heritage object. The Norwegian state—the same state whose §213 made the *pissoar*'s queer use criminal, whose police surveilled these places—now maintains the structure as heritage. The queered purpose that required the facility to be invisible as a cruising site is now the stated reason the object is nationally interesting. On the one hand, this criminalized practice transforms into protected memory through the happy Norwegian progress narrative. On the other hand, by stating the unspoken queer intention of the site with a plaque, the recognition has stripped it of its queer usage entirely, rendering it a cruising ground that can no longer be cruised. The plaque may as well read, “a lot of gay sex happened here ... and is over,” filing cruising safely in the before-times. In fact, men are still cruising in Oslo tonight, on apps and in parks. The conditions that necessitated coded public sex may have eased, but they have not vanished. The possibility of surveillance—the forbidden element or the danger of being caught—is a key element of cruising, but it comes in many forms. Surveillance of gay sex has not ended, nor has the erotic charge of cruising. Can the state hold queer memory without straightening it into national pride? In comparing this performance of preservation with those performed in Skeivt Arkiv, I see some differences. Kjærlighetskarusellen is kept as a monument, finished and available to stand as a token of the state progress narrative. While some of Skeivt Arkiv seems certainly monumental, especially as an institutional gem of the state, I read Skeivt Arkiv as a keeper of prompts, unfinished and awaiting bodies.

From a legal context in Norway, public sexual conduct may be criminalized under §298 of the penal code, which punishes sexually offensive or indecent conduct “in a public place” or toward someone who has not consented:

§298. Seksuelt krenkende atferd offentlig eller uten samtykke

Med bot eller fengsel inntil 1 år straffes den som i ord eller handling utviser seksuelt krenkende eller annen uanstendig atferd

- a. på offentlig sted, eller
- b. i nærvær av eller overfor noen som ikke har samtykket i det.

Tilføyd ved lov 19 juni 2009 nr. 74.

[§298. Sexually offensive behavior in public or without consent

Punishment shall be given with a fine or imprisonment of up to 1 year to anyone who, by word or deed, exhibits sexually offensive or other indecent behavior

- a. in a public place, or
- b. in the presence of or towards someone who has not consented to it

Signed into law by the Act of 19 June 2009 No. 74.]

(Regjeringen; Lovdata; my translation)

Offensive public sex is defined by either the subject who has not consented to the sex act or the onlooker who does not consent to encountering it in a non-private setting. Consent between sexual partners is important to section b, but consent, in this context, must also be given by any potential onlookers (and potentially the public place itself). The likening of the subject and the onlooker as apparently equal victims to the crime of public sex means that in Norway, the onlooker must also consent to encountering sexual acts.

In 2025, the Norwegian government revised its sexual offense provisions around *samtykke* [consent]: the government announced that the *Samtykkeloven* [Consent Act] entered into law on 1 July 2025, and the updated §291 now punishes sexual intercourse with someone who has not consented “verken i ord eller handling” [in either words or actions] (Regjeringen; Lovdata; my translation). This is an important improvement of the law in many cases, not least

for victims of sexual crimes. Any discussion of cruising must therefore include a nuanced consideration of consent, exposure, publicness, and the difference between desired risk and coercion—and any transfer of cruising into the archive inherits those stakes in altered form.

The stakes are, of course, not the same when cruising the archive, but parts of the analogy remain. A researcher can force a story on an object, mishandle it, or assume that a record containing sensitive information may be made public. Consent in the archive entails multilayered permissions that govern an object's reception: the university's or the state's terms, access restrictions, questions of implied anonymity after a donor passes, and the archivist's judgment about what may be shown and said. Cruising an archive requires attentiveness to these forms—these laws of the archive—as well as the unspoken ethics of handling intimate material. Cruising the stacks must perform its erotics of attention disciplined by care—keen to pull, and equally prepared for refusal.

Surveillance is another aspect of cruising that the archive transforms. The possibility of being hostilely watched has often shaped gay cruising. Fowler's discussion of Robert Yang's video game *The Tearoom* illustrates the structure. In the game, the undercover cop performs the same waiting, glancing, desiring negotiation as the other men, turning each possible partner into both desire and danger (Fowler 433). Compared to most public toilets, an archive is heavily surveilled: catalog requests, reading-room rules, donor agreements, staff presence, cameras, and locks are all forms of regulation. The archive's promise, however, is preservation rather than entrapment. The archivists are not intended to be undercover police; they mean to be hosts and caretakers.⁹ Still, an object comes out because someone requests it and someone else permits it;

⁹ This statement is not meant to give a pass to those archives which to this day house objects that were forcibly taken—especially from indigenous peoples—under the guise of preservation, often under the assumption that the people from whom archival objects are taken are mistrustworthy caretakers and that the objects themselves need to be preserved and displayed in an attempt to say something about both the source society and the society that stole them. By this logic of surveillance in cruising, archival consent was not obtained in these circumstances.

boxes open under conditions; a visitor is allowed to look, but only under supervision. Archival encounter authorizes a form of looking—a voyeuristic and exhibitionist thrill, even—and Skeivt Arkiv administers it with a calm institutional voice that explains how to view, how to touch, and how to be excited. The thrill begins with discovery and deepens with proximity to something not made for me. There is an unwrapping, and a life becomes momentarily available. A flirtation; sometimes an ecstatic moment. This is voyeuristic, but it need not be predatory. Cruising the archive asks for a more accountable looking, a looking that knows its desire, recognizes mediation, accepts distance, and can leave without possession.

I am not the first to use this term, though I was unaware of previous scholarship when the connection dawned on me. Ofield's 2005 essay, "Cruising the Archive," begins with bookshops, visual culture, and a young queer reader learning homosexuality through browsing, searching, and fantasy. He writes about the "expectant pleasure" of coming across what he did not set out to find and warns that secure knowledge about what homosexual subjects look like can turn research into "detection and identification" (Ofield 353). Cruising, for Ofield, offers a research practice with "diversion, irregular connections and disorderly encounters" (356–57). He offers a way to remain aware of the researcher's implication in systems of detection. Perhaps his most forceful claim comes in his assertions that interpretation can become "more reminiscent of a police raid" when it floods a scene with light and forces homosexual identification (Ofield 361–62). A certain danger for queer archival work as well.

Steven Paige's recent "Cruising the Archive: Discovering a Queer Methodology" is more closely related to my own usage. Paige describes the queer body negotiating archival relations through "intrigue and desire," forming connections across archival accounts, and recognizing the "visceral relationship" that forms when one meets charged archival items (Paige 209). In the

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archive, Paige's cruising method becomes a way of seeking queer relations "in the gaps and slippages," where "the archive yields to me and me to it" (209). He is especially attentive to the researcher's body in the archive, to the charged find, and to how queer self-recognition can become a route through collections that are not explicitly queer. We agree that desire may be used as an archival method of encounter, particularly in the sense that an archival object may direct the researcher as much as the researcher directs attention toward it.

My intervention, as I continue to develop and practice this method, turns toward a different institutional scene. Ofield refuses the detective's hunger for proof. Paige names the desiring body in the archive. Skeivt Arkiv asks for another layer that includes queer archival care and disidentifications inside a state-supported national institution. I am not cruising an archive in order to find latent homosexuality in an ostensibly straight collection, nor am I cruising for a queer, sympathetic network. I am cruising a national queer archive that already names itself *skeivt*, already invites queer materials, and already depends on archivists who guide access with queer care. So, in this context, my method of encounter shifts from serendipitously finding queer traces to slowly being present with them, after the institution has already accepted a queer identity and begun to gather queer life, placing it under state care. And it shifts from a solitary practice to a dialogic one: what I call co-cruising. As the introduction's scene in the stacks suggests, the route was made by neither party alone. Runar and Bjørn André followed their own pulls; I followed mine; each of us read the other's attention and adjusted. The archivist is not the cop in the tearoom and not a passive retrieval mechanism—he is a co-cruiser whose excitement, hesitation, and judgment are part of the encounter's choreography. Co-cruising is Conquergood's and Madison's dialogic co-performance relocated to cruising the archive. The researcher, the

archivist, and the object are all implicated in the meaning-making process, with the researcher being primarily accountable for the conditions under which knowledge is produced.

I must pause here to acknowledge the ways in which gay male cruising could too easily become the base model for queerness. Fowler warns that an unreflective use of cruising can universalize queerness through gay men—often white gay men—and privilege sex as the central orientation of queer politics and aesthetics (428). O’Mullane cautions that contemporary cruising discourse can overburden queer sex with the task of realizing either utopia or dystopia (8–9). Even Muñoz warns against criticism that glamorizes gay male cruising into “a boring ontology”—an aestheticized essence of queerness that, precisely by being romanticized, goes flat (*Cruising Utopia* 18). I do not intend for cruising to become a heroic metaphor that makes every archival encounter sexy, radical, or male. *Skeiv* cruising names a practice of moving toward what glimmers without assuming ownership of it.

Cruising the stacks, then, takes several lessons from gay cruising without becoming it. From gay cruising, it takes alertness to space; the value of a partial signal—a long look, a coded phrase; the excitement and danger of proximity; an ethics of consent and refusal; and the possibility that pleasure and knowledge may be held in the body before they are explicit. It leaves behind the fantasy that all queer archival work should be modeled on sexual pursuit, the assumption that risk automatically produces radical politics, and the romance of exposure for exposure’s sake. In practical terms, cruising the archive is a method of archival orientation. It may begin in a catalog, but it does not end with retrieval and return. It listens to archivists’ excitement and follows an object, often without a planned route. It slows down to take in detail. It is reflective and repetitive. It also makes room for disappointment—a lot of cruising results in nothing, and that is part of the practice. The thrill lives in the oscillation between access and

restraint: the archive invites intimacy with queer objects, and the archivist's reminder that this must be handled carefully. The thrill is also temporal. The researcher arrives late, after the life, and so cruising the archive means meeting the afterlife of a thing as well as feeling its not-yet-ness.

The descriptions of objects that follow are the first test of this method. Kim Friele's chairs, protest T-shirts, floppy disks, Bjørn Hatterud's first-date sweater, Arnold Havelin's survey responses, and Earle Hyman's lock of hair became meaningful because I was drawn to them in a co-dialogic between the archivists who cruised with me, my own repertoire of queerness, and the traces and pull of the objects themselves deemed queer/ed enough to enter this archival context. These archival traces reveal different conditions of archival encounter—access and prohibition, body and catalog, speech and storage. Each invites approach through desire, but desire is not enough. Desire must be held alongside consent, care, mediation, and the willingness to let queer history remain partly crooked.

Part 5: Cruising the stacks

Let's get one thing perfectly straight. I am not claiming that six objects can stand in for Skeivt Arkiv's full holdings, nor that they tell a complete story of Norwegian queer life. These are perfectly queer encounters with objects I met through a particular visit to the University of Bergen in September of 2025—a particular moment in time when fall semester classes had just begun and parliamentary elections were underway; with particular archivists, including Runar Jordåen, whose research I had come to know through my interest in Ebbe Hertzberg, perhaps Norway's first publicly outed man; and with my own particularly queer and scholarly attention.

As Part Four established, cruising the archive names a method of relation and archival care. Two further vocabularies complete the method's toolkit before the objects arrive: orientation, and residue. Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* supplies the first. Orientation, for Ahmed, concerns how bodies are directed toward some objects and away from others (27), how lines are laid down and followed (61–63), how space acquires habit and expectation (129–32). The straight line is not just moral or social but spatial and epistemological: one follows what is already arranged (36, 88). “If orientation is a matter of how we reside in space,” she writes, “then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as ‘who’ or ‘what’ we inhabit spaces with” (Ahmed 3). A queer orientation deviates, drifts, or gets pulled off the line (Ahmed 21). The archive has its own *straight* lines—provenance, relevance, chronology, accession, index—and cruising does not abolish those terms but approaches them *at a skeiv angle*.

In his chapter “Gesture, Ephemera, and Queer Feeling,” Muñoz calls for a “hermeneutics of residue,” a way of reading what lingers after performance, after contact, after the scene has supposedly passed. “What is left? What remains?” he asks, and answers: “Ephemera remain” (*Cruising Utopia* 71). Ephemera “are absent and they are present, disrupting a predictable metaphysics of presence”; the actual act “is only a stage in the game ... and there is much that follows” (Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 72). If the actual act is the referent an item in Skeivt Arkiv points to—a specific day, a person—then the item, read through a hermeneutics of residue, holds a possibility that matters enormously for queer researchers. “Although we cannot simply conserve a person or a performance through documentation,” Muñoz writes, “we can perhaps begin to summon up, through the auspices of memory, the acts and gestures that meant so much to us” (*Cruising Utopia* 71–72). For queer bodies, he concludes, “the gesture and its aftermath,

the ephemeral trace, matter more than many traditional modes of evidencing lives and politics”; the hermeneutics of residue are calibrated to read gestures and know them “as vast storehouses of queer history and futurity” (Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 81). Queer researchers, calibrated through lived experience to take the embodied seriously as rigorous evidence, can read that residue even in the objects’ new context in Skeivt Arkiv.

In my usage, then, *residue* names the affective and temporal remainder that clings to an object beyond its description: the trace of touch, the shape of use, the risk, the not-quite-recoverable. By *ghosts*, I mean the afterlives these objects carry: shame, criminalization, diagnostic curiosity, secrecy, survival, flirtation, wit, camp, public courage, private attachment. In his chapter “The Ghosts of Public Sex,” Muñoz borrows Derrida’s *hauntology*—a tool for understanding being as “neither living or dead, present or absent” (Derrida qtd. in Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 42)—to situate gay cruising within queer history and politics. The researcher’s eye, Muñoz writes, must be “sensitized in a certain way” to “catch other visual frequencies that render specific distillations of lived experience and ground-level history accessible,” so that it can “potentially see the ghostly presence of a certain structure of feeling” (*Cruising Utopia* 42). Ghosts, in this reading, are not always scary or sad, though they may be. They are unfinished social presences. In Skeivt Arkiv, they appear when an ordinary object bodies forth absent people, absent scenes, and absent possibilities. Meeting them well requires the minoritarian slowness I drew from Mengesha in Part Two: a refusal to rush the object into a single story.

With the method in place, the following objects are approached not as illustrations but as the texture of the argument—showing how queer archival care works through access and withholding, through the body and the catalog, through speech and storage.

Kim Friele's Chairs

I am oriented to return to the chairs because they were the spark for my cruise through the archive: they taught me how the archive was working before I had formed language for it. I wouldn't have thought to request access to these items if I were to research Friele or the LGBT rights movements in Norway. They hold no obvious political significance in themselves, like a protest banner or a legal document. They are chairs: embroidered, carved, ornate, domestic, bourgeois, ordinary in the way furniture becomes ordinary when it has been used for years and then moved into another setting. I did not look for provenance or a maker; I am unsure whether they are handmade or were bought at a department store. I trusted Runar entirely when he told me they had once belonged to Kim Friele.

Mark Sandberg's "effigy" is the clearest way to describe this archival operation, and his book is worth dwelling on because it concerns precisely the Norwegian staging of famous absence. In *Living Pictures, Missing Persons*, Sandberg opens with the playwright Henrik Ibsen's reserved table and chair at the Grand Café in Oslo:

Imagined to be present while historically absent, Norway's best-known literary celebrity now makes his appearance in the café as an evocative spatial effigy—a missing person. [...] The space reserved exclusively for Ibsen [...] also provides viewers with an imaginary kind of participation, an implicit invitation to try that space on for size in their minds, measuring body for body, imagining their own fit to his obviously well-worn chair.

(Sandberg 1)

The display, Sandberg continues, "creates missing persons on both sides of an imaginary divide": the absence of Ibsen's body makes way for the spectator's potential presence, but

viewers must also absent themselves from their own bodies to participate in the representational game (1). In his humorous opening, Sandberg imagines scenarios in which the rules of the game are broken, and a physical body sits in the chair (1–4). The absent body is equated with the space it would occupy *were it to return*.

Both Ibsen's and Friele's chairs function as spatial effigies, but with different stakes and payoffs. Both reference a historical figure without showing the body, marking a place where that body might have been. At the Grand Café, the chair was arranged with accouterments suggesting a warm body, a recency, a soon-to-return presence—a novel experience for guests in on the joke, and also, frankly, a touristic gimmick in a commercial space. (The display has reportedly been removed in the hotel's renovation, offering a rich contrast in its absence: an effigy sustained by hospitality marketing lasts as long as the marketing does, while Friele's chairs persist under archival care.) In the sitting room of Norway's premier state institution of queer memory, the chairs present instead as a reference point for those in on the very real experience of being queer in Norway, or of seeing Norway queerly. Their casual presence offers an immediate conversational opening and a quiet test of a guest's queer calibration upon entering this space of care.

The chairs hold the shape of use while refusing use. The refusal is negotiated ad hoc—if someone were to sit down by accident, I assume they would be corrected. In that sense, the chairs too are surveilled, but with an intention of queer care rather than policing for punishment. They offer themselves to the visitor's body and then withdraw, and that withdrawal produces a rich co-performance: preservation requires a limit, access requires proximity, and feeling emerges in the negotiation between the two. Where any chair might invite a body, these chairs

stage the invitation's suspension—and only the archive's frame, its caretakers make that suspension legible as care rather than mere prohibition.

The preservation of these chairs also refuses to let Friele's public narrative become the whole story. Her public importance is well established—as discussed in the introduction, the editors of *Skeiv lokalhistorie* identify her as the leading figure in the removal of §213, and her donation became the archive's first collection (Hundstad, Hellesund, and Jordåen 12; Gillow-Kloster and Jordåen 297). National memory often prefers the heroic individual, the “great woman” of rights history. The chairs trace their owner differently: with a line of domesticity, taste, class, rest, hosting, the intimate architecture around activism. One sits differently in chairs like these; they imply posture and pomp, a room, the ordinary repetition of a body resting, and they hint at Friele's Bergen bourgeois background without reducing her to it. They ask the visitor to imagine the activist not in the street or at the microphone but seated—reading, working through a speech, pausing, annoyed, amused, tired, elegant, bored. These objects let public courage keep a domestic home at Skeivt Arkiv.

Queer history in Norway, as in America, is often marked by impossible or delayed contact. We come after. We arrive too late to ask the question, or the person is gone, or the language has changed, or the public story has hardened around a few familiar facts from the state's timeline. The chairs “body forth” contact through absence (Sandberg 5). They are intimate without being available; they let Friele remain near and unreachable. They also introduce camp in a quiet register. The chairs are fancy, a little theatrical; they almost overperform refinement, and their ornate flowers and carved wood produce a tonal shift from bureaucratic archive to queer salon—excess with memory attached, style preserved as evidence. Evidence of exactly what is up to the beholder.

T-Shirts as Politics Worn on the Body

The Friele collection also includes the more overtly political objects one expects from the archive of a political movement. Gillow-Kloster and Jordåen describe holdings that include organizational correspondence, political material, documentation of pride festivals, parades, demonstrations, and parties, and donated objects such as “buttons and tee shirts with slogans” (298). Hellesund’s early account of donations likewise lists buttons, T-shirts, posters, videos, cassettes, banners, and dental dams (123). The list is both funny and methodologically serious, insisting that queer life enters history through things that touched bodies, circulated in rooms, hung from walls, and made sex safer.

A protest T-shirt is a wearable document: it turns a political slogan into costume, public address, bodily surface, and repeated performance. Folded in a box, the shirt is archival material; worn in public, it is repertoire. Even washed and ready for the archive, clothing remembers sweat, weather, posture, risk, pride, boredom, waiting, chanting, dancing, and the courage or exhaustion of making oneself visible. Fabric provides a nearness to the bodies that made the garments—extranational sweatshop workers, local screenprinters—as well as to the bodies that wore them. A shirt stretched across a body performs differently from the typed state resolutions that queer bodies fought for, even when both belong to the same campaign. As discussed in Part Two, Taylor describes performance as an “act of transfer,” transmitting social knowledge, memory, and identity through repeated, embodied behavior (2–3). A protest shirt asks a body to carry a cause—politics made wearable, seen by strangers, washable, wrinkled, fading. The wear on these shirts exhibits effort and repetition, not necessarily success; in a minoritarian context, the act of wearing can mean risk. The shirt is residual evidence that someone allowed a cause to sit on their body in public.

In preserving Friele's shirts, the printed text matters to Skeivt Arkiv, but the residue is not exhausted by the slogan. It includes the scene of wearing, the conditions of visibility, the social risk of recognition, and the later act of donation to a state-legible queer archive. This act says, officially, that this used cloth belongs in national memory. The cheap, hasty material of such shirts is itself residue: a performance of the perceived immediate need to get the word out for this particular cause, at this particular time.

The most striking slogan I encountered while cruising was not in Friele's shirt box. It was in a black-and-white photograph, professionally reprinted and pinned to a display board near the magazine storage, arrayed with other images of public protest. The composition centered on a white T-shirt worn by a marcher, framed by a darker zip-up jacket. The shirt read "Tror du at du kan se på meg om jeg er HIV-POSITIV" [Do you think you can tell by looking at me whether I am HIV-positive], with "HELSEUTVALGET PLUSS" in smaller capitals beneath (my translation). The shirt wrinkled as the wearer's arm lifted, but not enough to obscure the words. Just above the collar sat a full, genuine, open-mouth smile—the crop stopped above the nose, preserving anonymity from the eyes up. The raised arm wrapped around another figure, eyes similarly cropped out, whose smile seemed to me perhaps more posed for the camera. Behind them, the back of a leather-jacketed body. Helseutvalget, the organization named on the shirt, was founded in 1983—as Helseutvalget for homofile [the Health Committee for Homosexuals]—in response to the HIV epidemic that was killing gay men and men who have sex with men in Norway, and it continues today as a nationwide foundation for sexual and mental health among queer Norwegians (Helseutvalget; my translation).

My pull toward this image arose in an especially charged way from my own experience as an HIV-positive American. The ghosts of stigma, and of long state hesitation to fund research

while millions died, weighed on my own diagnosis and were presented back at me in this photograph. As I negotiated my closeness—aware that I might violate the consent of this object by attaching my own experience to it as ownership—relational kinship arose in my embodied repertoire. I have worn both of those smiles since being diagnosed and finding others in my local queer and positive communities. My experience is not theirs, but I can recognize and respect the subjects of the photograph and the photographer's care in capturing this crop of a moment.

Archival care transforms the temporality of these wearable objects. In use, a T-shirt moves with the body; in the archive, it is stabilized, folded, boxed, described, or displayed. Stabilization removes the object from the body to preserve it for future bodies. The queer archival task is therefore to keep the body imaginable. A T-shirt that becomes a flat text has been preserved too narrowly. A T-shirt understood as an object of repertoire keeps the body undead within the archive, even when the corporeal body is gone.

Floppy Disks and Obsolete Futures

I am old enough to have used floppy disks, but the archaicism of their showing up today is not lost on me. The floppy disks in Friele's collection look so technologically small now. They belong to a futuristic expectation that expired: once they promised storage, portability, and modernity—the ability to write quickly, save neatly, copy exactly, revise and circulate widely. Now they are fragile, obsolete, and dependent on machines that are themselves disappearing. Their archival charge, on my cruise, came partly from this representation of a lost futurity.

A floppy disk dramatizes the problem of preservation because its content is not visible from the object itself—the disk preserves without showing, and so the labor of preservation, usually invisible behind a legible document, here becomes the whole drama. The disk may hold correspondence, drafts, organizational records, speeches, minutes, lists, or nothing recoverable at

all. It must be read by a particular machine; the machine must still exist; the file format must still open; the data may be corrupted; the label may be vague. One disk in Friele's collection bears a handwritten note across two labels:

OBS!: Denne filmen vet jeg IKKE hva inneholder!! —19.2.2015 Kim Friele

[Note!: This film—I do NOT know what it contains!! —19 February 2015, Kim Friele]

(From a personal photograph, 8 September 2025; my translation).

Scrawled in her own handwriting, with emphatic double exclamation marks and capitalization, and timestamped just before the archive's official opening, the note felt almost too perfect for the Skeivt Arkiv I was cruising. It points to a haste to send the materials before fully verifying their contents. Keeping is not the same thing as knowing.

Derrida's archive fever contextualizes the disk: the desire he describes to recover an origin, here made technologically uncertain. As discussed in the introduction, the archive for Derrida promises return while requiring a place, a substrate, and an authorized interpretation (10); the floppy disk adds the demand of a machine capable of making the substrate speak. Its preservation is a wager. Someone kept it because it might matter, and the archive accepted the wager without yet knowing whether the disk would yield content, not least because of its provenance from a credible donor who had already given so much. The technological vulnerability of the disks mirrors the vulnerability of queer memory stored by individuals rather than institutions; more than containers, the disks are a reminder that preservation is always a race against technological forgetting.

Jack Halberstam's "queer failure" refuses to read this as pure loss. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, failure can "escape the punishing norms" that discipline bodies into proper adulthood and achievement (2). The floppy disk has failed as contemporary technology, but that failure

interrupts the smooth story in which preservation technologies simply improve over time; the future imagined by one generation becomes the inherited preservation problem of another. I appreciate how this also queers Friele's heroic biography just a bit. Legal progress narratives show activists at the level of public achievement, and Friele's vast collection is indeed meticulously self-recorded. The disk shows the other side of that labor: typing, saving, revising, labeling, filing, not knowing whether the file will matter, and leaving it for someone else to open. The archive's care lies partly in the decision that such performances of administrative and technological awkwardness deserve preservation alongside the documents of triumph. For what it is worth, Jordåen assured me that the contents were recovered and re-digitized—though he could not remember, at the time, exactly what was on them either.

Bjørn Hatterud's First-Date Sweater

“Bjørn Hatterud (b. 1977) is a queer artist, writer, and contemporary musician. His archive consists of a variety of personal belongings and papers that document a queer artistic life” (Skeivt Arkiv catalog; my translation).¹⁰ As Runar and I cruised the stacks, a maroon sweatshirt from Hatterud's collection was unfolded and held up for me to view. It reminded me of shirts I wore while I was coming out in the late 2000s. Then Runar told me this was the shirt Hatterud wore on his first date with his now-husband.

That detail changed everything. Even without a mental picture of Hatterud—I had never met him, nor celebritized him as I had Friele—the shirt carried the residues of anticipation, nervousness, desire, self-presentation, ordinary melodrama, and the practical question of what a

¹⁰ Hatterud's collection is publicly cataloged under his name in Skeivt Arkiv's online catalog (katalog.skeivtarkiv.no, collection ubb-ska-a0049, accessed 1 May 2026), and he is an openly queer public figure. I name him here as the archive itself does.

newly self-identified gay body should wear when it is about to become visible to another queer person in a new way.

I would not have found the sweater through a planned search. What terms could I have entered to pull this object from the stacks? It emerged because Runar Jordåen, the archivist who collected the item, knew its story—passed to him from Hatterud—and felt pulled to present it. Its meaning arrived through consecutive layers of retelling and relation: the object was performed into archival significance by the donor’s narration, and the archivist’s, and that performance transmitted the conditions under which the object could be read, though not necessarily the metadata with which it could be recorded. This is co-cruising in miniature. The route to the sweater ran through Runar’s repertoire, not my catalog queries.

Ann Cvetkovich organizes her book *An Archive of Feelings* around cultural texts as “repositories of feelings and emotions” (7). The shirt is certainly such a repository, but its affective force in Skeivt Arkiv emerges through *skeive* archival practices of care: donation, narration, handling, recognition, relation. The story activates the textile; the textile gives the story weight; together they preserve a threshold of queer coming out—before and after the first date, before and after a recognition of self and queer desire becomes fully embodied. A first date might seem too ordinary for national memory, but as established above, Muñoz insists that precisely such ephemeral gestures hold the queer residue that traditional evidencing overlooks—exactly what a state queer archive must be able to keep if it is to be legible to queer researchers.

The stakes of the date are exuded through the cool casualness of the shirt. Relationally, I remember my own first date and exactly what I wore: a pink polo, white corduroys, flip-flops. I wasn’t out to my parents, so the date was more like a walk around my small town, where the

stakes of being outed—by looking too long, holding hands, or (gasp) kissing—were worth the risk, but best avoidable. Bjørn’s date and mine were surely different. But the pull is still relational. A researcher who cruises this archive must avoid appropriating the sweater’s feeling as their own. The sweater’s affective force depends on difference as well as recognition; the object creates relation, not sameness. Queer archival care asks the researcher to let the object touch them without taking the experience away from the person whose life it marks.

Arnold Havelin’s Survey Responses and the Anonymous Voice

Arnold Havelin’s 1965–66 survey materials occupy a very different register. Where the sweater preserves intimacy through a single named object, the survey responses preserve a collective field of self-description under scholarly scrutiny, in a time when sex between men was still criminalized in Norway. Skeivt Arkiv’s *Skeivopedia* article on the surveys, “Spørreundersøkelse 1965,” describes the questionnaires as a rare source offering some access to the private lives of gay and bisexual people in Norway before 1972, from a period when public discourse around homosexuality was shaped by “pathologization and stigmatization” (Evang; my translation). The article explains that DNF-48 initiated a public-attitudes survey in 1965; that Havelin proposed an additional survey addressed to people who identified as homosexual or bisexual; and that he sent out 7,000 questionnaires, receiving just under 500 completed responses, 268 of which were later donated to Skeivt Arkiv (Evang).

The responses sit strangely between institutional knowledge and queer self-narration. A survey lays down the initial rules of the encounter: it determines what can be answered, organizing the respondent’s life through its questions before the respondent ever writes back. Havelin’s project sought to understand living conditions but also possible “causes” of homosexuality (Evang); in a second *Skeivopedia* article, “Arnold Havelins forskningsprosjekter”

[Arnold Havelin's Research Projects], Jordåen notes that one stated aim was to investigate why some people "develop a homosexual disposition" and others do not (Jordåen; my translation). The frame remains diagnostic, even where Havelin resisted the more pathologizing assumptions of his contemporaries. The respondents wrote inside that frame.

But they also wrote beyond it—against the grain of the form. Evang notes that Havelin left space for additional information at the end of the questionnaire, and that many respondents used this space extensively, sometimes adding extra pages with vivid descriptions of their life histories and their understandings of homosexuality and society (Evang). Because anonymity was necessary, some signed only "Vennlig hilsen N.N." [Sincerely, N.N.] or "hjertelig hilsen - ?" [heartfelt greetings - ?] (Evang; my translation). The respondent is present and withheld, intimate and protected, grateful and afraid. One response quoted by Skeivt Arkiv is difficult to leave behind: "jeg synes at livet for meg som homofil faller meget vanskelig. – Til sine tider føler jeg det som om jeg beveger meg på kanten av en avgrunn av ensomhet og håpløshet" [I find life as a homosexual very difficult. At times I feel as though I am moving on the edge of an abyss of loneliness and hopelessness] (Evang; my translation). A person used a narrow opening in a quantitative study to make their loneliness heard. There is something quietly remarkable, too, in the act itself: respondents entrusted their testimony to a researcher's apparatus while living in ways the state still deemed criminal—a fragile wager on being counted that anticipates, decades early, the archive that now holds them.

The questionnaire asks for legible data; the respondent gives data, and something more. As established in Part Two, Muñoz's disidentification works through available forms without simply submitting to them (*Disidentifications* 4). A response like this disidentifies with the

survey: it answers the question while bending the space toward personal testimony, using a form designed for measurement to create a small scene of relational address.

The responses are historically valuable because they give access to voices that might otherwise have remained private, scattered, or silent. They are also intimate documents produced under conditions of stigma and legal threat. I was able to look at them, but Runar warned me that the information they contain is too extensive to maintain the anonymity Havelin promised his respondents, and the archive restricts them accordingly. That restriction should be read as care: a university-housed national archive can preserve sensitive testimony precisely because it can regulate access, and such regulation may be the condition under which fragile voices survive without becoming extractive spectacle. The public-attitudes portion of Havelin's research shows the social backdrop against which these respondents wrote. In Havelin's 1968 conclusion, he concluded:

Man er stort sett villig til å akseptere den homofile som medborger og synes ikke at homoseksuelle forhold mellom voksne bør være straffbare, under forutsetning av at den homofile i sitt privatliv opptrer som om vedkommende ikke er homofil og ikke omtaler sin legning eller har noe seksualliv.

[People are generally willing to accept the homosexuals as fellow citizens and do not believe that homosexual relationships between adults ought to be punishable, provided that the homosexual acts in his or her¹¹ private life as if he or she is not homosexual and does not discuss his or her sexual orientation or have any sexual life.]

(Havelin 71 qtd. in Skeivopedia by Jordåen; my translation).

¹¹ Havelin avoids the use of gendered pronouns in his phrasing, though he does not use contemporary gender neutral pronouns, like the increasingly accepted Norwegian pronouns "hen/hen/hens" akin to the singular "they/them/theirs" in non-binary usage in English.

Conditional tolerance had to be purchased with silence. The responses preserve the emotional cost of that bargain—and show how some used the available technologies of research to speak: cautiously, anonymously, and sometimes with extraordinary force.

Earle Hyman, Rolf Sirnes, and the Lock of Hair

The lock of Earle Hyman's hair, held among materials connected to his partner Rolf Sirnes, may be the most intimate objects I saw in the stacks, and one that connects the archive to America. Hyman was an American actor with a long public career and a deep connection to Norway, best known for his Shakespeare roles in the United States and for portraying Russell Huxtable on *The Cosby Show*. Skeivt Arkiv's Skeivopedia article describes him as a "*Norges-venn*" [friend of Norway], known in Norwegian media as unusually attached to the country and fluent in Norwegian; it notes that Sirnes, a Norwegian who grew up in Haugesund, had been Hyman's partner for nearly thirty-five years by the time Hyman appeared at the Amanda Prize, Norway's film and television award, in 1987 ("En norsk-amerikansk kjærlighetshistorie"; my translation). The two met in 1954, quickly became a couple, and moved in together; by a 2000 interview, they had been together forty-six years ("En norsk-amerikansk kjærlighetshistorie").

The article's central archival claim pertains to visibility. In the public story, Hyman appeared as a beloved American actor, a fluent Norwegian speaker, a performer of Ibsen and Othello, a celebrity who loved Norway. Sirnes often disappeared from that story in favor of his celebrity paramour. The professional archive and the intimate archive are likewise separated: Skeivopedia points to the Earle Hyman Collection at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., whose description notes that Hyman lived with his partner of fifty years, "a Norwegian seaman named Rolf Sirnes," and that photographs and correspondence appear to

relate to the relationship; in life, Hyman described it as a “passionate friendship,” calling Rolf his “partner” (qtd. in “En norsk-amerikansk kjærlighetshistorie”)—descriptions that bear both truth and evasion. “Partner” clarifies, but does not solve, the earlier opacity.

In the stacks with Bjørn André and Runar, we took stock of the ephemeral effects that made their way into Skeivt Arkiv rather than the Folger: most notably, a lock of Hyman’s hair kept in a small metal box, donated, I am told, by Sirnes’s family after the couple’s passing. Hair is a difficult archival object because it is bodily without being the body, dead matter that once grew from a living person, carrying the aura of relic and effigy. Its meaning depends entirely on relation: how was it collected, who saved it, why, under what circumstances, and how did it come to the archive? A keepsake of love? A family remnant? A mourning object? Sandberg’s missing-person effect returns here in another form. A chair marks where a body could fit; hair carries a material trace of the body itself. The lock says, without speaking, that a relation mattered enough for a bodily trace to be kept.

The Hyman/Sirnes materials also demonstrate how Skeivt Arkiv can hold transnational queer relation inside Norwegian memory without converting it into a simple national possession—without claiming the relationship as Norway’s property or trophy. The Norwegian side of Hyman’s transnational life is kept at Skeivt Arkiv while his professional papers sit in Washington; the story moves between North Carolina, Brooklyn, Haugesund, Bergen, Skånevik, television, theatre, race, celebrity, and semi-private attachment. The archive holds its part of that span without pretending to hold the whole.

Cruising Skeivt Arkiv always leads back to archival care. In each encounter—warned chairs, a photograph that recognized me, a disk that refuses reading, a sweater with a relayed

story, surveys guarded by a sixty-year-old promise, hair routed home to an archive that would say its name—queer archival knowledge emerged in the relation between preservation and activation, between holding and being held. The objects did not illustrate a theory I brought. They taught the theory this thesis has been assembling, and they point, every one of them, in the same temporal direction: forward. The conclusion follows them.

Conclusion: Cruising the Not-Yet

This thesis began with two chairs I was not allowed to sit in, and it has argued that the prohibition was an invitation: Skeivt Arkiv keeps Norwegian queer history alive by staging co-performances among archivists, visitors, and objects in which the archive and the repertoire continuously activate one another. My argument seeks to live between or at an angle to a set of tempting binaries. The archive is not the opposite of queerness; Taylor's archive and repertoire are mutually dependent, and Skeivt Arkiv is the dependency made institutional. The state is not simply straight, nor the queer archive simply resistant; the institution is a disidentification, working the form that has power from within, sustained daily by braided practices of care. *Skeiv* is not simply Norwegian for queer; the two words are overlapping kin with divergent trajectories, and the Norwegian word's unfinished grammar—its not-yet-existing verb—turned out to name the archive's temporality better than any settled term could. And cruising is not just a metaphor imported for its thrill, but rather a historical repertoire of coded attention, consent, and tolerated disappointment. In my visit, this became co-cruising: a queer dialogic method for approaching Skeivt Arkiv. What remains is the claim toward which every object has pointed: futurity.

It is often assumed that archives face backward. The assumption is everywhere—in ordinary usage, in institutional self-description, in the spatial metaphors of “looking back” on

history. This is only half the picture. As Derrida introduces it, the archive is driven by anxiety about a future in which nothing is preserved, which means even the most past-obsessed archive is a machine pointed forward, fueled by illness and obsession (19). What I found at Skeivt Arkiv, and what this thesis has tried to document, is an archive pointed forward and fueled by something else.

Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity (2009) opens with the sentence this thesis's title answers: "Queerness is not yet here" (1). Muñoz means the claim precisely. Queerness, for him, is not an identity achieved or a set of rights won; it is "an ideality," a "doing for and toward the future," felt in the present as "the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality" (Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 1). Muñoz builds his theory of queer futurity through readings of performances from queer pasts—Frank O'Hara's poems, Andy Warhol's silk-screens, Fred Herko's choreography, and more—because, in his account, the queer horizon requires a gesture toward the past. Following Ernst Bloch, Muñoz argues for "critical utopianism," warning against the abstract, untethered to a past:

Abstract utopias are indeed dead ends, too often vectoring into the escapist disavowal of our current moment. But a turn to what Bloch calls the no-longer-conscious is an essential route for the purpose of arriving at the not-yet-here. This maneuver, a turn to the past for the purpose of critiquing the present, is propelled by a desire for futurity.

(Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 30)

Muñoz refused sufficiency in the present. He read gay liberation's demand for a new society. Muñoz insists such language must not be dismissed as naïve, because its "we" addresses a collective that has not yet fully arrived; the past's unfinished demands are addressed to us, and beyond us. Desire and pull are key parts of this argument as well. He continues:

Queer futurity does not underplay desire. In fact it is all about desire, desire for both larger semiabstractions such as a better world or freedom but also, more immediately, better relations within the social that include better sex and more pleasure.

(Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 30)

Desire drives queerness toward a horizon that we cannot anticipate or fully understand, but it must remain tethered to an understanding of the past to contain a rigorous understanding of what queerness could be rather than just what it is.

Through this frame, Skeivt Arkiv's horizon comes into focus. The archive's objects are Bloch's concrete utopia in performance—hopes rooted in real bodies and everything that came with them. A protest tee shirt, a floppy disk, a sweater, two chairs, a survey response, a lock of hair—each contains residue, and residue, as Part Five established, is not merely what is left of something, but what is left for someone. Residues are an invitation to future contact. The archive does not let us float away from the world into abstract optimism; it turns us toward the world with a sharpened sense that the world could have been, and still could be, otherwise. The survey respondent at the edge of his abyss addressed a future reader; the archive is the apparatus that brought me together with him. Friele kept a disk she could not read for readers she could not imagine. Sirnes's family donated a lock of hair to an institution that did not exist for most of the years the hair was kept. Every object in this thesis is a message whose address line reads not yet. And the archive's practices of care—preserving without finishing, describing without exhausting, restricting without sealing away—are best understood as the maintenance of that address system: keeping the conditions open under which queerness may be encountered in the stacks and reanimated in co-performance. Skeivt Arkiv's deepest responsibility, I have argued, is to protect incompleteness. Its utopianism is not a mural of arrival; it is a reading room with the lights left on.

I want to end with one more object—one I met later that week while I was poring through boxes of organizational publications, sitting in the reading room. I have saved it for last so that it might perform my conclusion for me. *Frimerket* [*The Postage Stamp*, a word that abstractly contains a dual meaning with “the mark of free(dom)”] was a Bergen-based queer zine from the 1980s, exactly the genre of fragile, small-circulation, community-made print that archives historically lost and that Skeivt Arkiv was built to keep. In its pages appears a short poem titled “Eit menneske” [A Human Being], signed only “TRUDE.” (a first name, a withheld surname, a reminder of the surveys’ “N.N.”).

EIT MENNESKE.

Eit menneske av kjøtt og blod
kunne like gjerne gått i dine sko.
Ein forskjell er det jo.....
at han eller ho

- elsker ein person av same kjønn.
- Så hør på deira bønn:

Vi ønskjer likeverd og respekt
- for å elska som ein vil er ein
menneskerett

TRUDE.

EIT MENNESKE.

A human being of flesh and blood
could just as well have walked in your shoes.
There is, of course, one difference.....
that he or she

- loves a person of the same gender.
- So listen to their prayer:

Vi wish for equal worth and respect
- for to love as one wants is a
human right

TRUDE.

(Trude, “Eit menneske.” *Frimerket* nr. 2: 1985, pp. 23).

You can feel the activism of its day, and the ghosts of the systemic pressure it pushes against: the poem’s whole rhetorical engine is the address to a hostile or indifferent majority, an insistence that the queer person is a human being of flesh and blood who could just as well have walked in your shoes. Disidentifications are present in the way the poem takes the majoritized framework (the demand that gay people justify their desire) and works it from within, conceding

a single difference, only to convert the concession into a polite but firm demand: “hear their prayer.” The residue is in the craft: the deliberate punctuation, the dashes and ellipses that hold hesitation and insistence in the same breath. The rhymes are lost a bit in English, but in Norwegian the quatrains bind the body—*blod/sko* [blood/shoes]—to *jo/ho* [of course/she], even creating a feeling of calling out in their assonance. Then a couplet binds *kjønn/bønn* [gender/prayer], and the final line gives us *respekt/rett* [respect/right]. The poem’s keywords—*likeverd*, equal worth; *respekt*; *menneskerett*, human right—are the vocabulary that Norwegian law would not honor in full for decades after 1985: partnership was eight years away, marriage twenty-four. The horizon the poem looks toward was not yet there.

And then there is the ending, which is the reason this poem must end this thesis: the final line—the declaration that loving as one will is a human right—carries no period. I do not know whether the omission was the poet’s choice or the zine’s typesetting, but in the preserved and archived artifact, the poem does not close. It stops at the edge of its own demand and leaves the demand open, grammatically pending, addressed forward. The missing period points directly at the not-yet-here. Forty-five years later, a reader in Skeivt Arkiv meets the poem and the sentence is still open—because *likeverd* is not a date one passes but a horizon one keeps, and because the archive, by holding the poem unfinished, holds the address line intact. Trude’s “we” included people Trude had never met. It includes the archive’s next visitor. It is the same “we” Muñoz hears in gay liberation’s manifestos: a collective not yet fully arrived, summoned by the text that names it.

The implications of this study extend beyond Norway, as other nations face their own versions of the question that Skeivt Arkiv answers daily: what happens when the state preserves histories it once endangered? When queer life becomes national pride? The dangers are real, but

the findings here suggest the dangers are not destiny, because they are met by performances—by the daily, bodily, dialogic work of keeping objects open to bodies not yet arrived. As I was finishing this thesis, I wrote to Runar Jordåen with final questions about the objects. He answered quickly, between obligations: he was traveling the next day to Salten Pride, in a small place called Rognan in Nordland, to give two lectures—and to collect material and stories (Jordåen, personal correspondence, 3 June 2026). The detail is small, and it is everything: the national queer archive, in June 2026, is also a person on a northbound train, going to a town most Norwegians could not place on a map, to listen. The repertoire is out gathering. The archive is holding the door.

Queerness is not yet here. Skeivt Arkiv is one of the places where its approach becomes perceptible—where the past’s unfinished sentences are kept legible, warm, and open—giving the future something to cruise.

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