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The Trouble with Straight Time

Disruptive Anachronisms in Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz's *N.O. Body*

> [W]e can't know in advance what the past will turn out to have been.
> – Valerie Rohy, *Anachronism and its Others*.[1]

The camera pans over an empty nineteenth-century lecture theatre. A person in an elegant Victorian dress enters the room in the back and descends the stairs towards the platform. She has dark hair that reaches down to her knees, and a thick beard covers her lower cheeks. The person – whom we might call Nobody – approaches the blackboard where a series of photographs is mounted, depicting the head of a bearded woman in a bell jar.[2] Nobody inspects the images before lowering the blackboard to give space for the white background screen. She ascends the lecture table and turns on a slide projector with a remote control. A picture is projected across her body and onto the screen behind her. It shows a photograph of a woman in an elegant Victorian dress with long dark hair and a thick beard. Nobody looks at the woman who looks remarkably like her. Slowly, she starts to caress the woman in the image. She does not touch the screen, but interrupts the projection and uses her shadow to enter the space of the image. With her shadow she tenderly caresses the woman's hand, her shoulder, her cheek, her beard, her hair.

Then the film shifts register. Nobody lies down on the lecture table. Supported by pillows and with a little stage lamp lighting up her face and voluminous hairy bosom, she looks flirtingly towards the empty lecture hall, towards the camera, towards us. Covering her face with a mask of black leather strings, she starts to flip through the carousel of slides: a series of photographs from a medical examination of a person with seemingly congenital body parts, with and without clothes; a close-up of a naked person in the same room with a leather mask concealing his or her identity; a plate with scientific drawings of birds.

While flipping through the images, Nobody starts to giggle. Removing her mask, she picks up a pair of opera monoculars and ogles out towards the lecture theatre, laughing even harder. She turns on a portable radio standing on the table and starts tuning until she finds a frequency she likes. An uncanny laughter in the soundscape of theremin vibrations fills the room, making her chuckle more intense. Nobody stands up, flipping through slides of what looks like mannish women and transgender men; lesbian bar life and types of fetishists; documentation of S/M-clubs and sexual domination scenes; drawings of giant humans and so-called intersex butterflies. After a while her laughter shifts register – it seems hollower, forced, dark. She turns off the slide projector and looks out towards the empty seats in the lecture theatre. The camera follows her gaze, and the sequence starts over again as Nobody enters the room and walks down the stairs.

N.O.Body

N.O. Body (2008) is a fifteen-minute 16mm film shown in loop, made by the German-Swiss artist-duo Renate Lorenz and Pauline Boudry. Accompanying the film is a set of framed pictures of the slides in Nobody's performance-lecture. The best-known image in this series is the *carte de visite* of the woman with the beard in the start of the film, picturing the famous American side show artist Annie Jones (1865-1902). The character Nobody – played by performance artist Werner Hirsch – can be seen as a reembodiment of Jones, making the persona less an anonymous "nobody" than a particular *somebody*. This play between the unidentified and the referential is highlighted in the unusual spelling of the word *N.O. Body*. The title is borrowed from the German theatre director Karl M. Baer, who used it as a pseudonym when publishing his 1907 book *Memoirs of a Man's Maiden Years*, narrating the story of his life as an intersex person who was raised as a girl and transitioned to live as a man later in life.[3]

Such references to historical gender and sexual "nonconformists" are central to Boudry and Lorenz's work. *N.O. Body* is together with video installations such as *Normal Work* (2007), *Salomania* (2009) and *Contagious!* (2010),[4] part of a larger project they describe as a "queer archeology," taking the form of "excavations" into archives of the late nineteenth-century, using the

encounter with archival materials as a starting point for historical interventions.[5]

The work *N.O. Body* resulted from their research in the archives of the German sexologist and homosexual rights activist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) – the so-called "Einstein of Sex." Hirschfeld was the founder of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft [Institute for Sexual Science] in Berlin in 1919, and an outspoken public figure. He worked intensely to repel the infamous Paragraph 175 in the German law that criminalized homosexuality, using his studies of the biological diversity gender and sexuality to argue for the "normalcy" of difference.[6] *N.O. Body* revolves around one of his numerous scientific publications, the *Bilderteil* or picture book that is part of his five volume work on sexuality, *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreißigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet* [Sexual Knowledge – The Adapted Results of 30 Years of Research and Experience] (1926-1930).[7] All the images in Nobody's slide show are taken from Hirschfeld's remarkable and idiosyncratic visual encyclopedia; a book with over eight hundred pages of plates which covers a wide variety of topics on gender and sexuality, as the images presented in *N.O. Body* give evidence to.

The inclusion of a studio photograph of Annie Jones in this medical context might seem peculiar. Especially since the picture is of the kind sold as souvenirs in the famous showman P.T. Barnum's American Museum in New York, where Jones had worked and performed as a sideshow artist since she was an infant.[8] The inclusion of a souvenir photograph in Hirschfeld's encyclopedia suggests the complex connections between the entertainment world and the medical institution in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century – a connection hinged on their shared interest for people with "spectacular deformities".[9]

In the dream-like *mise-en-scène* of *N.O. Body* these two institutions are mapped onto each other, but traditional roles are reversed and time is out of joint: The "passive" object of the medical gaze has taken on the role as the performing subject of knowledge who controls the representations and staging in the lecture theatre. And the laughable object of the stare in the sideshow figures here as the laughing starer, who ogles and laughs at the potential audience, including us watching the film.[10]

N.O. Body draws our attention to the history of gender and sexual nonconformists and their position in the performance cultures of the medical and entertainment institutions. But it also asks questions about the life of archives and the temporality of history. In the film we see a photograph from Hirschfeld's archive come alive through performance, an act that emphasizes the doings and wanderings of historical images and documents. This prompts us to approach the concept of the archive from a different perspective than historian Carolyn Steedman's definition of it as a collection of "stuff" which "just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativised."[11] For whereas Steedman's deliberate prosaic description stresses the significance of the material conditions of archives – its dust and textures; its discontinuous texts and confusing fragments – performance studies has shown us need to think beside such discourse-based understandings of archives if we are to comprehend historical transmission in greater depth. Performance theorist Diana Taylor has for instance called attention to the connection between archival documents and what she calls the "repertoire": the performatic field of embodied knowledges.[12] *N.O. Body* stages the traffic between documents and bodies, opening up for a further investigation on how both archival "stuff" and performance remains and move around.

It is within this framework of historical transmission we should understand Boudry and Lorenz's characterization of their working method as a form of "collaboration with friends from the nineteenth century."[13] The use of the term collaboration indicates that they do not see archival material as dead objects from a distant past, but as "friends" with an agency and life of its own. Working together with such kindred spirits across time suggest a different understanding of history than one based on chronological order and clear-cut separation between past and present. In this article I will analyze how *N.O. Body* disrupts and calls attention to what I call *straight time*. In order to do so, I ask: What can we learn about history and historical transmission if we take up the unruly figure of the anachronism? This is a figure referring to the things out of sync with the present; the historically inappropriate; the temporally backwards, as the Greek roots of the word indicates (*ana-*, "backward" + *khronos*, "time"). Collaborating with *N.O. Body*, as the work collaborates with the past, the article engages with the practice of *touching history*, a performative historiography that

attends to the presence of the past in the present, and the desire for creating affective connections across time. Collaborating with *N.O.Body*, as the film collaborates with the past, the article engages with what I call *touching history*, a performative historiography that attends to the presence of the past in the present, and the desire for creating affective connections across time.

The sticky image of Annie Jones

Let us return to *N.O. Body* and the *cartes de visite* photograph of Annie Jones introduced in the start of the film. The specific genre of portrait photographs has not only been important for our view on the world of Victorian sideshows, it was also central in defining their own view on themselves. Even though Annie Jones made her name working as a sideshow artist in P.T. Barnum's American Museum and traveling circus, her reputation was highly connected to the widespread circulation of souvenir photographs of her. This popular commodity entered the market following André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri's invention of a multilensed camera in 1854, opening up for mass production of photographic portraits at a reasonably low price. The popularization of miniature portraits created a new way of looking at and being around photographs, instigating what has been called a "period of cartomania" in the latter half of the nineteenth-century.[14] The collecting habits did not only center on photographs of family and friends, but also involved images of famous people – including sideshow artists. The popularity of the latter owes much to P.T. Barnum's entertainment business, and his use of *cartes de visite* as the "media of choice" in advertisements and as souvenir objects.[15]

N.O.Body draws attention to the unexpected itinerancies of this commodity by staging its movement from an entertainment context to a medical discourse. The reembodiment of the image in the film represents yet another switchpoint for this image – a doubling that marks its entry into the realm of contemporary art and performance. And, further, through this article, the realm of performance studies and queer theory.

The traveling photograph of Annie Jones can be seen as what Mieke Bal has called a "sticky image," an image that not only sticks around – recurring in different contexts at different times, doing new work in each setting – but that

also "*hold[s]* the viewer, enforcing an experience of temporal variation."[16] I will return to the question of temporality, and now concentrate on the reappearance of the photograph of Jones in *N.O. Body*. In the film Boudry and Lorenz introduce the image of Jones into what I see as a queer space – a space that challenges our routinized language around questions of gender, sexuality, time, and history. In the film the meeting between the picture and its reembodiment sets the photograph to work as a historical "agent" within a different time-space than the Victorian era it usually speaks to. *N.O. Body* gives us a chance to see the photograph as a interlocutor addressing present issues on queer historiography. Allowing the image a status of a source on the present, rather than on the past, is central to the "performative historiography" I engage with in this text. This framework is inspired by performance theory Tavia Nyong'o, who in his genealogy of racial hybridity shows the importance of attending to the "performative effects of history rather than simply to add to the weight of history's pedagogy."[17] Nyong'o draws upon Walter Benjamin's argument that a historical contextualization of the objects under scrutiny only marks part of the job, since it is just as important to do "justice to the concrete historical situation of the *interest* taken in the object."[18] The performative historiography must therefore pay attention to the processes of cultural recall – processes where objects from the past become "historical matter" in the present, and thereby material "mattering to history."[19] With this Benjaminian focus on the "situation of the *interest*" in archives and histories in mind, we can ask: Why is the image of Annie Jones relevant for a queer project? And how does *N.O. Body* position it as a historical matter that matters to queer history now?

A queer historical impulse

The reappearance of Annie Jones in *N.O.Body* can be seen in relation to what Carolyn Dinshaw has described as a "queer historical impulse […] toward making connections across time."[20] This "queer historical impulse" has a long history on its own in the Global North. Way before the development of the gay and lesbian liberation movements in the 1970s, various sexual and gender "deviants" desired to be part of a larger community, and History with a capital H functioned as an orienting device in the negotiation of a sexual identity. As Christopher Nealon

has shown in his study of US gay and lesbian culture before the Stonewall-rebellion in 1969, the wish for collectivity often took shape "in an overwhelming desire to *feel historical*." Many turned to a fantasmatical past of Sapphic love and Greek pederasty in order to "convert the harrowing privacy of the [pathological] inversion model [of homosexuality] into some more encompassing narrative of collective life."[21] The creation of transhistorical narratives was central to the development of what Nealon terms the "ethnicity" model of gays and lesbians – a "tribal" figuration that still has currency in how "rainbow" communities understand themselves in the present.[22] Finding and listing famous homosexuals have been central to establish transhistorical lineages that could make visible and, hence valuate homosexual existence. An example of this can actually be found in Magnus Hirschfeld's visual encyclopedia, where chapters on the "androgynous," "homosexual," "transvestite," and "virile woman" look more like the popular "who's who in LGBT history" than a sexological study, with its portrait galleries of people like Socrates and Johan Joachim Winckelmann; Hans Christian Andersen and Marcel Proust; Sappho and Radclyffe Hall.[23]

The search for historical "ancestors" to back up a contemporary identity has been a disputed issue in both LGBT studies and queer theory over the last thirty years. The debates have often centered on how to name and properly address non-normative gendered bodies and sexual practices in different periods than our own. While the need to rewrite heteronormative histories has been understood to be imperative, the strategies for doing so have diverged.[24] A frequent reference point in the debate has been Michel Foucault's well-known argument of the discursive change in the understanding of same-sex practices introduced by the emerging science of sexology in the late nineteenth-century. The new sexological institution introduced a shift in the perspective on same-sex practice, from being seen as a criminal act, and hence a problem for the juridical system, to being seen as a symptom of a sexual identity – *the homosexual* – "with a past, a case history, and a childhood," to be controlled by the medical institution.[25]

The fact that our current understanding of "homosexuality" – and "heterosexuality" – is of such a recent date has been central in arguing for the radical historicity and contingency of sexual categories – a contingency

complicating the search for mirrors of ourselves in the past. Many queer scholars have followed Foucault's Nietzscheian attack on the "traditional" historical belief that we can ever truly *know* the past, calling to "dismiss those tendencies that encourage the consoling play of recognitions" across time.[26] The problem with this form of recognition is not only that it gloss over temporal and contextual differences, but also that it consolidates and universalizes *present* identities.[27] This has resulted in a critique against so-called "anachronistic" backward projections of modern categories on historical persons, which has been seen as a form of archival violence.[28]

N.O. Body enters into this theoretical minefield of historical relationality in LGBT and queer historiography with its staging of an encounter with the image of Jones and other bodies in Hirschfeld's sexological archive. *N.O. Body* is not the only recent work which takes interest in Victorian "freaks" and the freak show as a genre, and it might be tempting to read the work in line with the many queer, feminist, and transgender projects that posit famous bearded ladies as heroines in the fight against current gender and sexual norms.[29] But I think we would miss some of the theoretical potential in *N.O. Body* by limiting the presence of the image of Jones to stand as a figure of inspiration for contemporary activism. For even though the artists have turned to the archives in order to reconfigure the present – a move central to the logic of reclamation – Boudry and Lorenz' "collaboration" with this historical "friend" seems to be a troubled and antagonistic one, without reassuring plays of identification. But this does not mean that *N.O. Body* denounces the role of desire for history or affective connections across time. The work is indeed a *moving image* in both senses of the term – a film brimming with affects and emotions and touches across time. This might remind us that the queer historical impulse to touch and be touched by history can be more complex than merely functioning as a "consoling play of recognitions," so abhorred by Foucault. Instead it invites us to suspend the imperative to "always historicize!" as Fredric Jameson famously formulated it, by positing the unruly figure of anachronism as an interesting site of engagement for historiographical thought.[30]

Troubling Anachronisms

Nothing is really in the right place in the filmic universe of *N.O. Body*: the audience is missing, the lecturer caress and laughs at the "objects" she presents in the slideshow rather than explaining them to us, and it is hard to really understand what is going on. Even establishing the date or period of the filmic present is difficult to do. Whereas the Victorian dress and lecture theatre sets the stage in the late nineteenth-century, the presence of a Kodak Carousel slide projector, introduced in 1961, and a Tivoli Audio radio launched in the early 2000s, function as time breakers that disturb the temporal framework of the film. The looping of the film, which makes Nobody appear again and again on the screen, highlights the film's engagement with temporality. Not only does the film take time to watch, it also works *with* time, challenging conceptions of starts and endings, linearity and chronology.

The use of such "perversely anachronistic" props works as a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* that emphasizes the preposterous nature of historical transmission.[31] Limiting of the obvious time breakers to instruments of pedagogy and transmission – slide projector and radio – stages the mediated nature of our encounters with the past. The artifice of the staging does not come across as a failure of proper historicization, but as a means to present "anachronism as a substance of historical thinking rather than as its guilty secret," to borrow Adrian Rifkin's acute observation.[32]

But it is not only on the formal and narrative level that anachronisms draw our attention to questions of time and history. Anachronism is also the nodal point that binds together the three main historical fields of knowledge that the image of Annie Jones is in contact with in *N.O. Body*: the entertainment business, the medical tradition of sexology, and the art institution. It is worth taking a detour to look at the role that anachronism has played in the histories of these fields, as it will give us a chance to better understand the political poignancy of the temporal questions we are dealing with.

The Ascendancy of Straight Time

Boudry and Lorenz' use of anachronism as an artistic method that pull the past into contact with the present is, of course, not new. Such purposeful activation of history by setting it out of joint was a common and praised trait in for instance

allegorical history paintings until the late eighteenth-century. The establishment of public art museums in Europe at this time was foundational in putting a stop to the esteem of anachronistic play with temporal clashes, as it came in conflict with the new "image of history" manufactured by the powerful institutions.[33] As Didier Maleuvre has argued, the emerging art establishment fostered a "museum time" structured around chronological order and periodical sequences, creating a value hierarchy that excluded works that did not conform to the adopted scientific understanding of historical progression.[34] The chaotic logic and meetings of multiple temporalities in the previous collection-ideal, the *Wunderkammer*, was now straightened out in orderly museums where narrative paths lead one through the historical and cultural development of the arts.

The art museum's attempt to discipline temporal aberrations and anachronism indicates the widespread influence of the "accumulative temporality of pedagogy" that Homi Bhabha has argued is central to the logic of the modern nation state.[35] For the museum's investment in a pedagogic timeframe paralleled the temporal ideologies that structured and supported the natural sciences as well – including the practice of sexology. As a new member of the esteemed natural sciences, sexology took part in the governmental machinery that aspired to produce "progressive subjects" that would contribute to the development of the newly industrialized Western world.[36]

The increasing interest in evolution in the aftermath of Darwin's 1859 publication of the *Origin of the Species*, reinforced the political efforts to get the Western societies to be in sync with an "evolutive time."[37] Evolutionary theory gave an important boost to established, so-called "progressive" sciences such as comparative anatomy, while being foundational for new disciplines such as eugenics, Francis Galton's science for "cultivating of the races." These scientific fields argued that controlled breeding and racial purification was important to secure the progress of society. With a set of "objective" systems came ranked and ordered bodies according to phases of evolutionary development, these sciences reinforced the racial hierarchies in the West.[38] Racialized "primitives" and "savages" were now presented as atavistic species – anachronisms – caught up in an early stage in the evolution of the human. It was these racial sciences that gave the budding discipline of sexology a language and a "ready-made set of

procedures and assumptions" about bodily difference.[39] The first generations of sexologists adopted the racialized understanding of "arrested development" in their explanation of "abnormal gendered species," such as Annie Jones, as well as sexual deviants, such as the "homosexual."

The sideshow and dime museums had a more vexed relationship to this middle-class pedagogy of "progressive subjects," associated as it was with the excessive pleasures of the lower classes.[40] But in a time where anxiety for degeneracy was rising, it, too, exploited the rhetoric of evolution and racial sciences in advertising and exhibition structures. Barnum and his likes presented both "savages" and "freaks" as anachronisms or evolutionary "missing links," and exhibited them as precious relics from a different time in the museums of "living pathologies."[41]

As Valerie Rohy argues in *Anachronism and its Others*, these ideologies of progression legitimized the containment of "deviants" on a moral ground by presenting racial, gendered, and sexual others as a threat to the development of the society. It was feared that their "arrested development," if they were given the change to reproduce themselves, would "stop time for all the world."[42] The art museum, as well as the medical and entertainment institutions, all had their share in straightening out the understanding of time and history, harnessing a racialized and heteronormative ideology of *straight time* that could manage and control the "anachronistic" subjects that slowed down the progress of Modernity.

Archival Violence

It is against this *chronopolitical* backdrop we must see *N.O. Body*'s engagement with the figure of anachronism. The deliberate contextual and temporal clashes in the film between the sexological discourse and the sideshow, between the past and the present, ask us to consider the residual effects of this ideology of straight time. This seems pertinent in a contemporary moment where a so-called "new-realist" right wing politics has gain popularity and legitimacy when arguing that the Western societal progression has been put at risk by the rising number of subjects with "no future", whether in the form of non-reproductive queers, over-reproductive migrants, traumatized immigrants or critically obese.[43] The work and history of Magnus Hirschfeld, should stand as an important reminder of the

danger we should have in mind if such anxieties against "anachronistic" subjects are placed in relation to the prevalent rhetoric of "liberatory biologism" we are surrounded with today.[44] For even though Hirschfeld stands out in the early history of sexology by opposing the politicized hierarchization of racial, gendered and sexual "others," the volatility of his conviction that biological foundation would "normalize" difference soon became evident. In 1933 the Nazi regime closed his institute in Berlin, burned his library in public, forcing him to leave the country. When the German Reich some years later instituted their systematized eugenic purification of the human race, it was a similar biological foundation of homosexuality, as the one sought by Hirschfeld, which was used to legitimize the obliteration of biological "degenerates."

N.O. Body's actualizes these histories of "progressive sciences" through the use of anachronism, reminding us, in Nancy Ordover's words, that it "would be a mistake to minimize the resemblance between much of the current rhetoric and the previous eugenics crusades."[45] *N.O. Body*'s engagement with the politics and history of temporality call attention to the ways in which our understandings of time, progress, and history are not as neutral and self-evident as they might appear, but that their meanings and values are inextricably linked to a racialized and heteronormative history of straight time.[46]

This detour into the politicized ideologies of progression demonstrates that anachronism is not always a "subversive" figure, since "chronology depends upon anachronism."[47] Yet, anachronisms can be used to disturb these very same ideologies. We see this in *N.O. Body*'s use of anachronisms to create a temporal disorientation that denaturalizes historical chronology and straight time. The figure works here to caution against the ideal of "getting history right" within a framework of a timeline-pedagogy, asking us instead to consider the "ethical chance that may lie within getting it wrong," as Tavia Nyong'o has noted in a different context.[48] This points to the fact that anachronistic backwards projections of concepts and identities on historical persons – so often and importantly criticized by queer theorists – is not the only form of archival violence we are dealing with in historical work on sexuality and gender nonconformists. A different form of archival violence is the naturalization of a

temporal model that legitimize the consignment of living bodies as "stuff" for the archival institutions to order, structure, contain, and exhibit.

Touching History

Nobody's performance-lecture takes up the potential of these improper relations to archives and history through a practice I call *touching history*. I use the phrase touching history, with all its sensuous and haptic connotations, in order to scrutinize the ways in which we affect and are affected by the past in the present. This entails paying attention to the touching taking place in our physical and mental labor of doing historical and archival work – searching, looking, digging, reading, writing, desiring, breaking and shaking things – as well as the experiences of how history touches us in the present.

My attention to the tactility of history is inspired by Carolyn Dinshaw's important work on "touches across time" in queer archival encounters.[49] Her engagement with sexualities in medieval literature values the "vibrating" moments in the archives that "introduces temporal multiplicity, an expanded now in which the past touches present."[50] Describing the effect of this "shared contemporaneity" as opening up for making partial communities across time, Dinshaw suggests that it is the *contingency* and not continuity that connects the past with the present – remarking how the Latin roots of the word contingent underlines this tactile relation ("con-", *together with* + "tangere", *to touch*). The term touching history is an attempt to bring Dinshaw's focus on touches across time in dialogue with my performative historiography that attends to historical effects and effects for history of sticky images, such as that of Annie Jones. The rhetoric of touch often implicates a distinct and stable subject that gives or receives a touch. By stressing the performative dimension of touching I want to keep in mind how these touches destabilize the relation between the researcher and the researched, the past and the present. The touch in touching history then, should in other words be seen as an inventive "act of reaching towards" rather than as a secure arrival, following Erin Manning's understanding of touch as a movement that enables a "creation of worlds."[51]

Nobody's performance-lecture includes two particularly rich examples of this notion of touching history that I will make some brief comments on here

towards the end. The first case in point is Nobody's startling gesture in the start of the film, as she caresses the image of Annie Jones with her shadow, and the second is connected to her roar of laughter when watching the images in the slide show.

Nobody's reaction to the photograph of Annie Jones projected across her body and on to the background screen takes the shape of what I call a *shadow caress*. Her careful caressing of the image of Jones's hand, hair, and beard exposes a striking desire to reach out towards the past without taking hold of it. The use of a shadow is informative in this regard. The figure of the shadow is usually deployed in a negative sense in LGBT-related historical work, denoting what has been kept in the dark and "hidden from history."[52] But the encounter between Nobody and Annie Jones gives us a different model for the connection of shadows and light in historical thinking. For all "queer" bodies have not been out of sight. As the archival images in Magnus Hirschfeld's book make evident, some have been placed in center of the attention of others. They have been over-exposed, so to speak. Nobody's shadow caress of Annie Jones can be seen as a gesture of protection, a dodging tool that interrupts the luminosity of a history of visual violence. Her caress disrupts our possibility of approaching the images in a distanced and controlled fashion, prohibiting that the re-exposure of archival materials turn into yet another peepshow for the privileged.[53] The gesture draws our attention to the power-mechanisms and potential violence in archival excavations and historical research – indicating that our touches *do* form and inform how the past takes shape in the present.

In Nobody's shadow caress it is the gesture that blocks the image of Annie Jones that marks the close attachment between the two. This paradoxical touch represents the pleasurable and generative potential in the partial connections established between Annie Jones and queer historiography – a connection suggesting the importance of "loss as a form – perhaps *the* form – of intimacy" in queer history, as Heather Love has argued in her work on queer archives.[54]

But if the shadow caress makes us question the appropriate ways of dealing with archival material, such ethical codes of conduct seem utterly disturbed when seen in relation to Nobody's roar of laughter when flipping through the images of "perverts" and "patients" in the slideshow. What is she

laughing of? Whereas it seem to be the images that touch her, prompting her to laugh, the fact that her face is turned towards the empty lecture theatre instead of the screen, underlines the indeterminacy of her amusement: Is she really laughing of the pictures or is she laughing of us, the imaginary public watching the film? Or is it the "researchers," such as me, she laughs to scorn – we who write articles and present our work accompanied by similar slide shows, benefitting on the exposure of others? Or is she inviting me to laugh *with* her?

Nobody's laughter makes me giggle, but it also makes me uneasy. Her laughter unsettles my position of interpretive security and role as a researcher, pointing out how powerful laughter can be in order to undermine authority.[55] Perhaps she laughs of how our "serious" attempts to teach and transmit historical and archival work often neglect a central element of history, namely its ability to surprise us, to put us out of place, to disturb the position and authority of the present. This is perhaps the most important reminder that the image of Annie Jones gives us in *N.O. Body*: that the present is inhabited by ghosts from the archives which resists our attempts to keep time in place and lock up the cases of unfinished histories.

N.O. Body's touching history allows me to rephrase Valerie Rohy's axiom that features as the epigraph of this article: Nobody's laughter shows us not only that we "can't know in advance what the past will turn out to have been," but also that *we can't know in advance what the past will turn out to do to us.*

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Notes

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[1] Valerie Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 130.
[2] The photos of the head of a bearded lady are by Zoe Leonard and are part of her series from natural history and medicine museums. Little is known about the woman in the pictures; neither her name of whether she agreed to donate her body to science. The only information available tells that she worked as a sideshow artist in Paris. See Laura Cottingham, "Zoe Leonard," *Journal of Contemporary Art* <http://www.jca-online.com/leonard.html> [accessed 12 October 2010].
[3] It was the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld that helped Baer's process of transition, and he also wrote the afterword of the book. See N.O. Body, *Memoirs of a Man's Maiden Years*, trans. by Deborah Simon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); and, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, "Laughing About *N.O. Body*," trans. by Daniel Hendrickson, in *N.O. Body*, ed. by Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz (Zürich: Les Complices* and edition finch, 2008), p. 22.
[4] The film installation *Normal Work* features Werner Hirsch restaging four photographs of the Victorian servant and diarists Hannah Cullwick (1833-1909), taken in collaboration with her master, lover, and subsequent husband Arthur Munby (1828-1910). The re-embodiment of archival images is taken up in a somewhat different vein in the video installations *Salomania* and *Contagious!* which focuses on the history of dance. The former tracks the dissemination of the "image" of Salomé within queer circles by artists across the larger twentieth-century: from Oscar Wilde's famous 1891 play to Alla Nazimova's scandalously erotic performance in her 1922 film *Salomé*, to the Nazimova-inspired "Valda's Solo" by Yvonne Rainer in the 1970s. The latter film features Vaginal Davis and Arantxa Martinez staging a series of dance reenactments in a contemporary club, performing the "cakewalk" and "epileptic dance," popular at the Café Concerts in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century. See the artists's homepage for more information: <http://www.boudry-lorenz.de> [accessed 12 October 2010].
[5] Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, "Salomania," in *Salomania* (self-published zine, 2010), n.p. They borrow the term "queer archeology" from Mathias Haase.
[6] Edgar J. Bauer, "On the Nameless Love and Infinite Sexualities: John Henry Mackay, Magnus Hirschfeld and the Origin of the Sexual Emancipation Movement," in *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2005, p. 12ff.
[7] Magnus Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde auf Grund dreißigjähriger Forschung und Erfahrung bearbeitet. Band IV. Bilderteil* (Stuttgart: Julius Püttmann Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1930).
[8] Philip B. Kunhardt Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt, *P.T. Barnum – America's Greatest Showman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995). I use the term "sideshow artist" instead of the more commonly used term "freak-performer" when discussing Annie Jones. This is to emphasize Jones's self-consciousness as a performer and pay heed to her – futile – campaign to ban the term "freak" from the sideshow business.
[9] For a nuanced discussion of the contentious but close relation between the two institutions in Great Britain specifically, see Heather McHold, "Even as You and I: Freak Shows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity," in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. by Marlene Tromp (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), pp. 21-36.
[10] Boudry and Lorenz, "Laughing About N.O.Body."
[11] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 68.
[12] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).
[13] Pauline Boudry quoted in Andrea Geyer and Sharon Hayes, "In Conversation with Pauline Boudry & Renate Lorenz," *History Is Ours*, ed. by Andrea Geyer and Sharon Hayes (St. Gallen and Göteborg and Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2009), p. 92.
[14] Christopher R. Smit, "A Collaborative Aesthetic: Levinas's Idea of Responsibility and the Photographs of Charles Eisenmann and the Late Nineteenth-Century Freak-Performer," in

Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain, ed. by Marlene Tromp (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), p. 290.
[15] Ibid, p. 291.
[16] Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 166, emphasis in original.
[17] Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 7.
[18] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 391.
[19] Nyong'o, p. 13.
[20] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 1.
[21] Christopher Nealon, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion Before Stonewall* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 7.
[22] The widespread understanding of gays and lesbians as a "tribe" is observable in titles such as Eric F. Rofes's *Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in the Ongoing Epidemic* (1995), Linnea A. Due's *Joining the Tribe: Growing Up Gay and Lesbian in the '90s* (1995), and Richard L. Pimental-Habib's *Empowering The Tribe: A Positive Guide to Gay and Lesbian Self-Esteem* (2008).
[23] See Hirschfeld, especially pp. 490-596. For a discussion of the "representative individual model," see Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), pp. 44–45.
[24] For an overview of political discussions in relation to gays and lesbians engagement with history, see Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[25] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 43.
[26] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 153.
[27] For a useful summary of the queer critique in the context of US lesbian historiography, see Annamaria Jagose, *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 1-36.
[28] See Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, "Introduction: Caxton, Foucault, and the Pleasures of History," in *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. by Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York and London: Routledge, 1996); and Valerie Traub, "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. by George E. Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Malden and Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).
[29] Annie Jones is for instance portrayed in the Swedish cartoonist Loka Karnap's feminist canon-book *Pärlor och Patroner* (2009), and her image features as the photographic centerpiece in the poster for the DIY-activist event Copenhagen Queer Festival 2009, as well as on numerous online gender and sexual activist homepages. It seems to be the non-normative "freakishness" in the images of Jones that many activists identify with, since the biography of Jones does not position her as "queer" in any sexual non-conformative way. Her life as a well-educated Victorian lady, married twice, seems seldom to be mentioned or taken into account, perhaps because it makes her seem more "normal" than expected. As Robert Bogdan has remarked, women with beards were among the "respectable freaks" in the sideshows, and they were seldom framed as "monsters" or "beasts," since it was the incongruence between long beards and respectable femininity that created the main fascination. Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 224.
[30] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1.
[31] I borrow the term "perversely anachronistic" from Carla Freccero, *Queer / Early / Modern* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 3.
[32] Adrian Rifkin, *Ingres Then, and Now* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), p. 6.

[33] Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 1.
[34] The painter Jacques Louis-David, who acted as curator of the Louvre in this period, criticized painters who "commit anachronisms they never should have allowed themselves, such as introducing modern popes into scenes depicting much earlier events." Quoted in Ibid, p. 60.
[35]Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge 2004), p. 209.
[36] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 47.
[37] Ibid, p. 46.
[38] Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 24.
[39] Ibid, p. 25.
[40] Heather McHold has observed the changes undertaken in the freak show circuit in reaction to the moral regulatory campaigns in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. The anxiety of degeneracy forced the showmen to emphasize the relative normalcy of their freak-performers in order to keep the business running. This normalization process is evident in the title of journalist Arthur Goddard's 1898 interview, "'Even as You and I,' at home with the Barnum Freaks," presenting the freak-performers as respectable citizens. Annie Jones was among the performers included in Goddard's article, and he presented her as a person invested in domestic femininity, remarking that he encountered her as she was "finishing a lesson on the mandolin." See McHold, quote by Goddard on p. 29.
[41] The traffic did not only go from the sciences to the sideshows. In the 1880s, Spencer Baird, chief of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in the US, acknowledged P.T. Barnum's work with the American Museum as an important predecessor to the new scientific institutions, commissioning a bust of Barnum to stand alongside of Americans "'who have distinguished themselves for what they have done as promotes of the natural sciences'." See, Kunhardt Jr., Kunhardt III, and Kunhardt, p. viii.
[42] Rohy, p. ix.
[43] I am here evoking to the debates related to Lee Edelman's critique of the heteronormative logics of "reproductive futurism" central to the Western political imaginary in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke university Press, 2004).
[44] Nancy Ordover, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 2003), pp. 59-124; and Somerville, pp. 166-176.
[45] Ordover, p. 4.
[46] For a discussion of "straight time," see Rohy, p. xiv-xvi; Nyong'o, p. 10, and Kara Keeling, "Looking for M–: Queer Temporality, Black Political Possibility, and Poetry from the Future," in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2009.
[47] Rohy, p. 34. As Rohy notes: "Anachronism cannot simply be 'subversive': seductive as that formula may be, we cannot map one constellation of terms (hegemony, heterosexuality, whiteness, slavery, racism, teleology, calendar time) against another (resistance, blackness, homosexuality, perversity, atavism, the future perfect)." This is, she continues, because we must remember to look at how "anachronism functions within dominant discourse and the ways in which radical critique may be burdened by the baggage of linear temporality," p. 48.
[48] Nyong'o, p. 136.
[49] Dinshaw, p. 21.
[50] Carolyn Dinshaw, "Temporalities," in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, ed. by Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 112. Dinshaw quotes from Foucault's article "The Life of Infamous Men" when discussing the "vibrations" and physical impression of archival encounters.
[51] Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. xv.
[52] See for instance *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, George Chauncey Jr. (New York: Plume, 1990).
[53] In their vastly hagiographical biography on P.T. Barnum, Kunhardt Jr., Kunhardt III and Kunhardt describe their encounter with photographer Mathew Brady's set of glass negatives

taken of Barnum's performers – among others Annie Jones – as getting the chance to experience "a kind of Victorian-area peepshow." See Kunhardt Jr., Kunhardt III and Kunhardt, p. viii.

[54] Heather Love, "The Art of Losing," in *Lost and Found: Queerying the Archive*, ed. by Mathias Danbolt, Jane Rowley, and Louise Wolthers (Copenhagen: Nikolaj, Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, 2009), pp. 82-83.

[55] In *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt writes: "To remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office. The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter" (Orlando: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1970), p. 51.