Lecture delivered by Elly Clarke at Dragging the Archive: Kings, Queens, and Things at Bishopsgate Institute, 8th June 2023 celebrating the donation of the Orlando Myxx archive to the Institute, which features 2400 + drag performances and queer art events filmed by Orlando in and around London since 2016 - including one of #Sergina.

Delivered half de-dragged after performing as #Sergina in the early parts of the evening, and after the screening of #Sergina in the archive: <u>https://youtu.be/vA4KPnFpLiM</u>

1. Read out Dan Glass: Queer Footprints: A guide to uncovering London's fierce history¹ on the Bishopsgate Institute and Library, p.264-5

QUEER FOOTPRINTS NI-MINCES Two weeks later the headlines in the Goyder GBTQIA+ titles, from academic w handsliftQIA+mes, mon accentence works and before and peersy to pulp fiction, along with over 2000 defore around the world. The LGBTQIA+ Pamphlet orks, b wo weeks take one nearboard in the copies facility sunced that the landlord had evicted Winson McKenic & UKIP branch chairman, after the action. One heads nonnana around 2500 items including programmes for Things are a bit shit for UKIP's Winston McKen and create, as well as extensive ephemera such as club so hard that morning I spilled my tea shirts, banners and badges. the toilets are great for cruising. East 8. HOME AWAY FROM HOME - BISHOPSGATE 9. QUEER NIGHT PRIDE - THE GLORY, INSTITUTE, 230 BISHOPSGATE, EC2M 4QH KINGSLAND ROAD, E2 8AS Open to the public since 1895, this is my 'home away from 18 2020, Queer Night Pride demonstrations took over the stre a loudon as well as in Bristol, in response to a massive rise in her dime. Speakers included representatives from Traveller home': the biggest campaigning and counter-culture achieve in Britain. I researched Queer Footprints here, supported by the nicest LGBTQIA+ enthusiasts and fellow hereory geeds you ne ome. Speakers included representatives from Traveller http://www.speakers.com/speakers/sp speakers/speake speakers/sp could ever hope to meet. Hilariously wedged between banks and being even inspecto meet, miariotasy wengen newen usan hedge fund offices in the city's square mile, this glorious bailding tells a different story. Civil rights, trade union, and suffagette banners line the walls, and inside the Special Collections and Archives you will find one of the most extensive collections on LGBTQLA + history, politics and culture in the UK, from the late LGBTQIA+ history, polities and culture in us-nineteenth century onward. The collections encompass LGBTQIA+ history politics and culture, with archives from Stonewall, Switchboard, GMFA/ The Gay Men's Health Charity, OutRagel, material relating to the Terrence Higgins Trast, Schools Out, UK Leather and Fend Archives, Achilles Heal and Vamagazines, The Cay Liberation Front (GLP), Rebel Dykes, East London Strippers Collective, and the emerging anti-colonial Queer Revolution. The library One speaker at the demo was Sarah Jane Baker, formerly think longest-serving trans prisoner, who now coordinates imprisoner. Allance in support of trans people behind bars with beamed to the crowd as she addressed them: nand for equality. We are not ad curtains of shame and fear bet can never be realised. We ide is a protest. Note of the past, hiding behind curt of the past, a future that car

... And what we're adding today is 2400 + drag performances ...

2. Elly Clarke's academicish lecturette

So yes... I'm thinking about drag as a means and a method of resisting what I am calling the *snapping to grid* caused by norms – that gender drag normally targets- templates, and check boxes. And social media of course, with hashtags, geo location, predictive algorithms and so on.

¹ Glass, Dan. 2023. Queer Footprints: A Guide to Uncovering London's Fierce History. Pluto Press. p.264-5

Intimately associated with 'performance' (of the professional as well as stage/d varieties), I understand drag as both a burden- a limiting factor, as in the 'drag of an aeroplane wing'²- and a possibility. A means and a potential of resisting or pushing (back) against the restrictions of the things listed above. As a force, drag pulls in two directions at once: forwards, and back. It's already a contradiction. Darg is about the pose as well as the code³; an intentional blurring in-and-out of focus, a code switching that doesn't go all the way, or could, but doesn't have to stay there; intentional il/legibility and un/resolution as the place we may choose to remain, whilst retaining the right to our fluidity, non-fixedness, our plurality, our permission to change, to be many, to be not always the same. Our right to enter a party without standing on a spot marked with an X as the door person (with y/our legal photo ID in hand) takes y/our picture with a webcam.

Intimately entwined with this drag/ging in our digitally connected age is the data that is discharged from the movements and preferences, actions and reactions – and purchases- of that (gendered, classed, raced) body. Data discharging from bodies that are going about their business becomes definitions; definitions become categories, categories turn to and bring about more data, which feeds back what it is said to have learned (about us). It is a feed-back loop.

But Drag/ging can intersect and disrupt this feed/ing back. What drag does to the performance and lived embodied experiences of gender, so can it do to other things too. Through drag/ging we can shift what may be told about us, how people perceive us. We can drag closer to who we think we might be. We can drag further from that which we may just need a break from. And, even if we don't manage to break the trail of algorithms sniffing at our fingertips, at least we can have some fun along the way. Data – embodied by this 6TB of drag sitting before us, that we are shedding light on today,- is also an archive, and archives, data. Most archival material accumulated today manifests itself digitally rather than physically. In August of 2021, Instagram recorded an upload rate of 65,000 photos per minute to its platform.⁴ But- to archive something is also to put it away. When we no longer want to see those emails in our inbox, or those Instagram posts of times and people that no longer correspond with our presents, we can archive them. Preserved, (rather than deleted) but separated from today's workload.

However, to separate it (in a building, in a separate folder on your email programme) is not to banish it from life. So long as people are still engaging with an archive, it is, as Stuart Hall put it, 'living'.⁵ Jacques Derrida traced the etymology of the word archive to ancient Greece and found it to mean at once a place of "commencement' as well as the place 'from which order is given'⁶ – that's to say a beginning and an end simultaneously. [A tug (like drag) in two opposite directions at once.] In ancient Greece, placing items (usually documents) in an archive was to take them out of everyday circulation and store them (securely) at the home of the 'superior magistrates or the archons'⁷ that only those

² 'In aerodynamics, drag refers to forces that oppose the relative motion of an object through the air. Drag always opposes the motion of the object and, in an aircraft, is overcome by <u>thrust</u>.' SKYbrary, 2021. Drag. SKYbrary Aviation Safety. URL <u>https://skybrary.aero/articles/drag</u> (accessed 3.16.22).

³ I want your code, I want your pose – from 'I want your data' by #Sergina/ Elly Clarke: <u>https://soundcloud.com/ser-gina/airdrop-i-want-your-data-demo</u>

⁴ See Statista, Media Usage in an Internet Minute as of August 2021 <u>https://www.statista.com/statistics/195140/new-user-generated-content-uploaded-by-users-per-minute/</u>

 $^{^{\}scriptscriptstyle 5}$ Hall, S., 2001. Constituting an archive. Third Text 15, 89–92. p.91

⁶ Mansour, W., 2007. The Violence of the Archive. English Language Notes 45, 41–44. P.41

⁷ Ibid.

with the right credentials could access. The prestige and cultural and scholarly value of the objects was heightened by their separation from ordinary life.

But this the Orlando Myxx archive is living. It is of people who are – mostly, I hope, still alive nad will be alive, hopefully for a long time yet. It began in 2016, and will continue to be added to. Stuart Hall's insistence on the aliveness of an archive is more plural and democratic than either a beginning or an end, arguing that it is the very aliveness of an archive makes it impossible for it ever to be complete, because the present engagements with it means it is constantly reinterpreted:

'The very idea of a 'living archive' contradicts this fantasy of completeness. It cannot be complete because our present practice immediately adds to it, and our new interpretations inflect it differently. An archive may be largely about 'the past' but it is always 're-read' in the light of the present and the future: and in that reprise, as Walter Benjamin reminds us, it always flashes up before us as *a moment of danger.*'⁸

As with any research, an engagement with an archive is an engagement with oneself. What is gleaned and concluded differs with every encounter. Meaning is produced out of convergences (/Karan Barardian intra-actions and *spacetimematterings*⁹) between objects and narratives, fact and fantasy, memory and desire, the person coming into the archive and their responses - emotional, intuitive, and intellectual. As Andrew Renton and Kitty Scott wrote back in 1999 about a web-based archive about the forthcoming Bankside Tate in London, when the idea of an archive that was always available and divorced of its physical context (i.e. online) was still new, 'Archives are always remaking themselves. They are constituted not only by the materials contained within them, but by those who (re)turn to them. Nothing happens until then.¹¹⁰ In this way, meaning is produced out of a kind of haphazard, subjective lottery of conclusions drawn from evidence and affects, memories and cross references alongside a mishmash of ever shifting chronologies: the time/s the materials came from, the time/s they are being looked at and the time/s that lie ahead- some of which has already been imagined into place/s by the researchers (who were t/here) and the archivists. An archive is about saving / preserving / gathering for the future, for when the present is the past and the future the present.¹¹

And here, in this building, in the company of the people who work here and the people who come in, along with their own perceptions, desires, perspectives and interests, meaning is created in a plural, unfixed, ever dragging and draggable way. And very much out of and for the communities they embrace.

In *Cruising Utopia*, Jose Esteban Muñoz describes how part of queer's agency and power lies precisely in its moving borders and its resistance to definition. Ever shifting, the slipperiness of the terms queer,

⁸ Hall, S., 2001. Constituting an archive. Third Text 15, 89–92. p.91-92

⁹ Barad, K., 2010. *Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come*. Derrida Today 3, 240–268.

¹⁰ Renton, A. & Scott, K., 1999, Browser: a second visit to the archive in Harding, A., John Hansard Gallery, TENT, R., 2002. Potential : ongoing archive. Amsterdam : Artimo in assoc. with Anna Harding and John Hansard Gallery, Amsterdam. p.61 ¹¹ Franklin Furnace Archive is also alive because it is still alive as an organisation. It continues to offer grants and supports performance. New box files on artists and new fragments about any artist Franklin Furnace has ever worked with in the past are being added (to) continually and Goings On and Goings On for Artists continues to be sent out every Monday by Harley Spiller, as it was when I was there.

gender and sexuality have always been part of their seduction – and rawness. And crucially, a refusal to (come into) focus (or to snap to grid) can also be about hope and a radical imagining of something beyond the templates we were handed down: As Muñoz argues, 'Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.'¹²

This idea of queer world-making echoes what Jack Halberstam suggests about the ability of queerness also to shift [/drag] time. How non-conforming individuals spend, use and occupy time ('queer time' rather than 'straight time') is '[p]art of what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description [for] the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space.'¹³

What is in this archive is evidence of this plurality, this world making, these alternative lives lived and being lived. And, by visiting this archive, by shedding light on it, by dragging in and out of the archive, by contributing to it, we keep it alive. Just as we prove that other ways of living in the world are possible. Despite all the templates that threaten to snap us (back) into grid.

Many thanks for listening. this was me on the edge of academic drag.

And now I think we have a break until 9.45. Grab a drink, check out the cruising loos and run your eyeballs over the spines of these incredible books.

See you in 20.

¹² Muñoz, J.E., 2009. Cruising Utopia : The Then and There of Queer Futurity, New York University Press. p.1

¹³ Halberstam, J., 2005. In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives. NYU Press.p.1-2