

Chapter 24

“May We Meet Again”: Social Bonds, Activities, and Identities in the #Clexa Fandom

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The CW Network’s *The 100* is set in a postapocalyptic world, some 100 years after a nuclear attack. The survivors of that attack, led by The Chancellor, escape and live in an orbiting space station called The Arc. In this confined environment, any crime is punishable by death unless the perpetrator is less than 18 years old. After 97 years in space, supplies and oxygen are depleting and The Chancellor, along with the council, decides to send 100 convicted youngsters to the ground to see if the Earth is inhabitable again. When they arrive on the ground, a new tale of survival begins as they soon realize they are not alone and will have to fight to stay alive.

As Stephen King noted,¹ *The 100* is harsh and doesn’t shy away from being provocative. Adapted from the Young Adult sciencefiction trilogy by Kass Morgan, *The 100* is known for killing main characters and (sometimes) creating massive fan backlashes. *The 100*’s solid fan base seems to focus on the show’s strong female characters, compelling story arcs and a solid narrative storyworld, and this fan community engages emotionally and intellectually with the shows through various activities. *The 100* is often ranked third on the Tumblr fandometrics, which references the most talkedabout shows on Tumblr, highlighting the engagement around the show and the conversations generated among young adult fans. One story arc was particularly rough for fans—especially lesbian fans—when the producers decided to kill off a fan favorite character, Commander Lexa. She was the leader of the Grounder people, and in love with Clarke, the protagonist from ‘SkaiKru,’ or the surviving Arc children. After having sex with Clarke for the first time, Lexa is struck by a stray bullet and dies from the wound. This death provoked passionate, violent, and activist reactions from the fans, and as I discuss, uncovered the importance of the community, the expression of identity, and the sense of belonging among fans. For the fandom, an important issue of representation was tackled, as “a lot of our youth turn to fiction to find comfort and a sense of collective identity. They seek out fictional LGBTQ characters to find people whose struggles they can identify with, and look to these fictional characters for some sort of hope” (Bourdaa 2016b).

This chapter focuses on fans’ activities as testimonials of fans producing, reworking, and creating their own. I analyze these activities from four categories: (1) the creation of social bonds (Live Tweeting, cosplay); (2) the creation of collective intelligence (wikis); (3) the creation of creative activities (Tumblr, web series); and (4) the creation of social engagements (activism). Through these four categories, we will have a sense of the activities of *The 100* fans and how they organize themselves as a social and creative community. This chapter demonstrates what some fans are looking for in their fandoms and how they rely on each other. I argue that fandom can be safe havens where collective discussion can bring social issues and

debates into the public sphere. More than analyzing fans as productive (which I, of course, will talk about), I want to underline the activist and civic aspect of fandoms through a case study.

Context and Methodology: The Era of Convergence

Fans' uses of new technologies have shed light not only on fan practices, but also on the study of these "communities of special and specialized social audiences" (Ross 2009). The Internet, and new technologies more generally, have shaped practices, activities, and creativities from fans of any cultural product, be it a TV show, a movie, or even a comic book or graphic novel. I am interested in how "new" describes not novel activities, but more so how new technologies have redefined and restructured activities that fans have previously engaged in. As Roberta Pearson (2010) observes, "The digital revolution has had a profound impact upon fandom, empowering and disempowering, blurring the lines between producers and consumers, creating symbiotic relationships between powerful corporations and individual fans, and giving rise to new forms of cultural production" (84). Henry Jenkins (2006) coined the term "cultural convergence" in order to put the emphasis on the new role fans play in the digital age. He explains: "Cultural convergence describes new ways audiences are relating to media content, their increased skills at reading across different media, and their desires for a more participatory culture." Following Jenkins's (1992, 2006) seminal works on fans, fandoms and fan activities are being discussed in the French academic world and more largely in the Englishspeaking world as active and creative receptors who use new technologies to perform activities and gather in a "community of practices" (Baym 1999). In France, young scholars analyze specific fannish activity such as the creation of fanfiction (François 2009), or offer a typology of fan activities (Bourdaa 2014). They also envision fans as a virtual community empowered by their use of new technologies (Martin 2011; Peyron 2013). Other scholars study a particular object, e.g., TV shows, in order to understand a shift in the reception practices and draw some specific patterns in fans' reception (Combes 2011; Bourdaa 2012).

Given the new televisual, cultural, and technological environment of convergence, scholars need to develop new methodologies to analyze interactions within fan communities and the activities and creations shared by fans. Cyberethnography could be a valid option: this methodology involves the observation of a community but also, sometimes, participating in the debates via a user profile about a show to be legitimated as an expert (Bourdaa, Hong Mercier, and SeokKyeong 2011). For example, in research on *Battlestar Galactica* conducted between 2007 and 2009, I analyzed how fans used new technologies and interacted in official forums, and what creative activities they shared and spread in their community. The sense of belonging was strong among those *BSG* fans, and they appreciated having a place where they could meet and discuss freely. But, apart from debating storylines, plots, and possible spoilers, they also wrote and created fanfiction stories that they shared within the community.

In this chapter, I dive into *The 100* fandom, navigating through Tumblr posts, wikis, YouTube channels, DeviantArt pages, and Twitter accounts both from the writers, producers, actors, and

the fans themselves. During two months, between early March and late April, I gathered digital conversations and creations from fans using specific hashtags to collect the clues and digital traces. I watched the show but I did not participate in any fan activities, except livetweeting some episodes with the hashtag #Clexa at relevant times. This cyberethnography was thus not part of what Jenkins refers to as an acafan analysis. The amount of data collected is a testimony of the creativity of the fandom and of their multiple activities within the fandom and beyond that in the public sphere. I focus mainly on the Clarke/Lexa shippers (LexKru or Clexa), as they were the most active fans for the period I chose to analyze.

Keep Calm and Join the Fandom: A Typology of Fans' Activities

As active producers, fans rely on various activities and new technologies (social networking sites like Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook among others) in their fandom communities to share and spread content and meaning in the public sphere. Fans are a culture of participation, expressed through interactions, activities, activism, and sharing:

A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known to the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they created).

(Jenkins et al. 2016a, 4)

These activities can be classified into five distinct categories, which underline how fans organize themselves, how they create new content and use canonical ones, and how they discuss and debate core issues within the fandoms (Bourdaa 2016c). Of course, not all fans partake in these activities as there is a deep sense of intellectual and emotional engagement for each of the categories, and one fan can take part in one activity in a specific fandom and in another one in a different fandom, moving and migrating from fandom to the next.

Fans create social bonds in their communities that often transform into solid and lasting friendship. These social bonds appear of course during discussions and debates in forums, during sessions of cosplay at conventions, and during sessions of livetweets when fans gather and share their viewing experience using a common hashtag. Fans can also act as cultural mediators, for instance when they propose subtitles for episodes or films, an activity that is coined fansubbing. With the translations, they can make the series known to a larger audience and explain some cultural, social, and political aspects of the show. Collective intelligence, demonstrated by the creation of wikis, is also something fans experience. Wikis allow them to be archaeologists, as they can dig deeper, find clues and information, and map the narrative universe. Fans' creativity is the cornerstone of every fandom, and fans can write fanfiction, create fan arts, make vids, maintain websites like Tumblr, and/or impersonate their favorite characters in Twitter feeds or Facebook posts. All these creative activities highlight

the capacity of fans to intellectually engage in the stories and appropriate the characters to produce new meanings.

But it is fan activism that interests me most in this chapter. This category is at the intersection of cultural and political participation and implies a heightened level of civic engagement, especially among young fans who use the property as a tribune to express their topical opinions. For Jenkins (2012), fan activism refers to “forms of civic engagement and political participation that emerge from within fan culture itself, often in response to the shared interests of fans often conducted through the infrastructure of existing fan practices and relationships, and often framed through metaphors drawn from popular and participatory culture.” Social activism and civic engagement are the most powerful activities of fans as they collectively take a stand and defend a social or political cause and make it visible in the public sphere.

***The 100* and Clexa Social Activism: Taking Back the Narrative**

The death of Commander Lexa (also known as Heda), in the seventh episode of season three of *The 100*, led to a massive backlash from fans as it raised issues of representation (here of LGBTQ representation in a network show), and of production and of social interactions as the producer and its staff deliberately queerbaited (offered the suggestion that queer characters will be prominent in the narrative only to negate that promise) the lesbian fanbase into believing that Lexa was a central character and that she was safe (see Morimoto’s [Chapter 16](#) in this volume). Fans felt betrayed, as I will show in the next sections of this chapter, as Lexa was a model of representation of the LGBTQ viewers, and especially lesbian viewers, in a televisual landscape that is still shy about putting lesbian characters in the forefront of their shows. According to the website Autostraddle, 160 lesbian and bisexual characters have died in American TV shows since 1976, and 10 in 2016 alone (Riese 2016).

The most original and visible part of fans’ activity that transpires in the Clexa fandom is social activism and engagement relayed on different media outlets after the death of Lexa. The reactions from the fans were overwhelming and worked in three steps: (1) an outpouring of grief shared on social media; (2) a vocal backlash; and (3) an online fundraising campaign. As creators of the movement “We Deserved Better” stated in an interview I conducted with them: “We wanted to be acknowledged and we wanted to show them that we couldn’t be expected to continue offering free social media buzz and promotion after having been so blatantly used. The social media platforms we had previously used to aid the show would now be used to send a message” (Bourdaa 2016b).

Fandoms work as social communities, and as such they participate within and collaborate in social actions. As Jenkins, boyd, and Ito (2016) note:

Participatory communities work together to inform each other about the world and teach communication and organization skills. They help each other find their personal and collective voice to provide a context through which they can articulate their common interests and shared values. Ultimately, these communities encourage conversations about social and political change. (152)

After the shock of Lexa's death, fans rallied and took actions to make their voice heard in this issues. This activism was a response to both the death of the lesbian character,² and to the *queerbaiting* the executive producer Jason Rothenberg shamelessly performed for the promotion of the show's third season. Rothenberg interacted with his lesbian fan base by posting behind the scenes pictures of both actresses, sending reassuring messages during the hiatus between season two and season three and the early filming of season three, and stating multiple times on Twitter that Lexa is a defining representation and very important to the people creating the show. For example, on January 28, 2016, he tweeted "you guys know I don't ship. But I gotta admit, #Clexa is seaworthy. #JustSaying #The100," with mentions to the actresses Eliza Parker and Alycia Debnam Carter. Moreover, The CW promoted Lexa as the poster girl for the show, yet again emphasizing the importance of representation in the show (wednesdaybetter 2016, compiled by fans to make their case). Having this information carefully distilled to the fandom with the use of the #Clexa hashtag, fans felt betrayed by the death of the character and more importantly by how she died, hit by a stray bullet, just after she has sex with Clarke for the first time (the two scenes are montaged one after the other). Rothenberg, who lost 15,000 Twitter followers the day following the airing of the episode, issued a public apology in the form of an open letter where he explained why he chose to kill Lexa and how he didn't really think about the social consequences in terms of representation at the time. But that was not enough for the fans. Moreover, at *The 100* panel at fan convention WonderCon in March, all Lexa-related questions were banned at the demand of the showrunner, leaving the fans with a bad taste in their mouth. So, fans gathered on their virtual community and decided to act on it in several ways.

First, they organized themselves on social networks—especially Twitter—to trend some hashtags to make their discontent visible and worldwide. For example, for the airing of episode eight, fans boycotted the live broadcast and managed to make the audience drop from 1.47 million viewers for 3x07 to 1.25 for 3x08. This collective decision was taken in order to put pressure on The CW, and to show that Lexa as a character was an important part of the show and the narrative. Since then, every day a new episode airs on the channel, fans created a new, meaningful hashtag to continue their lobbying. For example, for episode 3x12 aired on April 21, one month and a half after the death, fans chose to trend the hashtag "#307ReasonsToFight," to show that this specific audience was still there to voice their concerns about the show, and that they wanted a better representation of minorities on American television. The organizers of this movement (@Clexa_Asia) posted instructions and a guideline for the other fans to follow and make sure the actions were linked together. They provided specific information on the timelines, given that the movement is global, and asked fellow fans to program tweets on TweetDeck to synchronize the movement, specified the mentions fans had to use in the tweet, explained that pictures or GIFs would help, and noted

that the profile should be public for a better way to retweet and share and spread the content. The hashtag trended in the USA with more than 147,000 tweets posted and registered. On the 24th of March, they trended #ClexaIsOurs, vocalizing the fact that the characters are a representation of who they are and an important one for that matter. In a further example, which was not during a livetweet of an episode of the show, fans decided to trend GOOD REPRESENTATION MATTERS to The CW, CBS, and WarnerBrosTV after multiple lesbian characters died, to show that the movement is alive and fans are aware of other tropes being displayed on other TV shows, and to show their support to other fandoms, thus creating a multihub of fandoms. Of course this kind of lobbying actions existed in a preInternet era as Jenkins and Tulloch (1995) recalled when Gaylaxians (gay fans of *Star Trek*) sent letters to the production to get a gay character on the show. But today, with the Internet, the lobbying is massive, worldwide, visible, loud, and fans use digital tactics to make things happen.

Fans can be more political in their actions and organize themselves to support social causes that matter to them and that are related to the narrative of the show they love. The Harry Potter Alliance, created by Andrew Slack and Paul de George, is a good example of an organizational activism community that “built connections between cultural and political participation through multiple levers, including narratives that wove together realworld and fantasybased civic action, and hybrid practices brought civic action into fan events and activities” (Jenkins et al. 2016b, 167). Other examples of fan activism include *The Hunger Games* fans fighting against the overglamorization of the Lionsgate Transmedia marketing campaign and “taking back the narrative” (Bourdaa 2015) into their hands or fans of Superman who represented him as a symbol of good immigration and a fighter for justice. For *The 100*, lesbian fans turned their frustration, anger, and disappointment over the death of Lexa into positive social and political activism in order to underline how representation and identities matter. They created two websites to give context to their outrage and their actions —wed deserved better.com and lgbtfansderservebetter.com—stating that Lexa as a character was the representation of the community on the show and killing her had a direct impact on lesbian fans. They wrote a statement in which they archived all the tweets from the writers’ room, the showrunner, the network, showing how misled they were and reinforcing their decisions to take actions. They also compiled 28 articles from critics, and continue to do so on their Twitter accounts, to explain how their anger was not only related to the end of their ship but turned into more of a social and ethical issue that needs to be addressed.³ This database of tweets and articles created by the fans themselves is important because it gives an informative background to justify and amplify their actions. They turned their energy into something positive by organizing a fundraiser for The Trevor Project, an association that provides suicide prevention to LGBT people. The tagline they used for their homepage on the fundraising website is noteworthy: “Heda, may we meet again. Your fight is over, ours is just beginning.” The character Heda (for Commander) is their mentor and they use the same sentences characters on the show say to each other when they part. The second part of the tagline underlines the reappropriation of the fight by the fans, by the passage from the pronoun “your” to “ours” and by the fact that they clearly position themselves in the continuity of Lexa’s actions.

They explain on the website the goal of this social activism: “We continue to attempt now what

we did then. To forge the creation of a safe haven opposing the baffling misrepresentation we had so hoped to eradicate for the younger generations. We will take this yet again to serve as a lesson, but, let it be us this time who teach it.” Clearly, the creators of the movement needed The Trevor Project at some point in their lives and now they want the LGBT community to feel protected and loved. They managed to raise almost \$121,000, donated by 3,827 fans. These actions are important to fans as a symbol of what matters to them and how to bring fans together in a social fight. This fundraising “has been effective at addressing the politics of self, helping young people to think differently through everyday life concerns, such as suicides, mental health and body imagery. It encourages them to come to grips with their own personal identity as well as to commit to changing public policy” (Jenkins et al. 2016b, 168). The example of *The 100* fits this description as the point of gathering was the death of a lesbian character, which encourages young lesbian fans who felt they were misrepresented on TV and in the public sphere to take actions together. These actions also give young fans a sense of empowerment and a tribune to voice their concerns, their choices, and their fears. As George de Paul explained to me in an email conversation on the political actions of the HP Alliance:

To an outsider perspective, fans may seem geeky or socially awkward. But really, it’s just a community of people with a shared passion and enthusiasm. So when we’re able to give that community positive and meaningful projects to engage with, it can help to validate their enthusiasm on both a personal way and in a public way. Henry Jenkins’s research has also shown that many of the young people involved in HPA weren’t politically engaged before. They are using new media in innovative ways, but are often cut off from the political process. Jenkins draws on the potentialities of new technologies to enhance the political and social activism of young people and generations: Yet the availability of networked communications has given more people access to the means of expressing their voice, increased public and governmental awareness of the diversity of voices that are seeking to be heard, led to new consideration of what kinds of spaces and platforms are needed for effective political exchanges, and fostered what he calls “new intensities of listening” (140) as more participants feel an ethical need to try to process the emerging conversation” (Jenkins et al., 2016). Our work has helped create a political and civic identity for young people that they’ll carry for the rest of their lives.

(George DePaul in Bourdaa 2014)

My analysis of the wedeservebetter movement shows that fans use social media to organize themselves, recruit fans, and make the movement visible and loud via numerous meaningful hashtags, and that they chose to empower themselves and fight the misrepresentation of lesbians on TV by raising awareness around the issue and helping a LGBT association.

A Strong Social Bond: Discussion, Debates and Friendship

The social link is strong in *The 100* fandom, especially for the Clexa shippers, as there is an issue of representation and identity at stake in the show and in the public space. Fans find each

other on Twitter using the hashtag #Clexa, a name created by melting the names Clarke and Lexa. David Peyron (2015) underlines that giving a name to the fandom, or here the sub fandom, “represents an act of social validity of their identity” and reinforces the existence of the group. They also called themselves LexKru, in reference to the character and the way tribes’ names are given in the show:

Lexa was an inspiration, and in that sense people wanted to identify with her culture, people wanted to honour her in a sense, and what better way to do this than to take our cues from the show? The naming of our group “Lexkru” in the fashion of grounder clans (Tri kru, Skaikru, etc.) gives people a sense of belonging and a way to reclaim Lexa as ours.

(Bourdaa 2016b, interview with We Deserved Better)

The activity of livetweeting is central for the fandom as it reenacts a pseudo collective viewing of the show, reinforcing the sense of belonging and the experience of sharing that is present in any fandom. After the problematic death of Lexa during the seventh episode of season three, fans gathered around hashtags they created to show their disappointment and how betrayed they felt by the show and the producers. Around #WeDeserveBetter and #LGBTFansDeserveBetter, fans tried to explain how the death of a lesbian character has an impact on their lives and on the way they are represented in general. For example, Mel on April 8, one month after the episode aired, tweeted “DARE TO DEFY TROPES – this is more than just TV ur playing with. It's our lives. My thoughts. #wedesebetter,” emphasizing the importance of lesbian portrayals on TV and how Lexa’s death affected her and other fans. To take the problem into the public space, domik added “movies: we die tv shows: we die books: we die video games: we die real life: we're done #wedesebetter #lgbtfansdesesebetter.” In those two examples, fans made themselves part of the issue by using the pronoun we/our and thus identifying themselves as lesbians, justifying their right to be mad and vocal on this issue. On Tumblr, again with the hashtag #Clexa or #ClarkeAndLexa, fans share their thoughts and their happiness of being part of a group that won’t judge them and that will understand their devotion to the characters. Pgj1982 posted a reflection of how she felt about the fandom and how important it is for her to be part of it, to not be alone. She concluded the post saying:

We are strong together; it is true the majority of us will never meet or crosspaths in life at lest (*sic*) not physically; but we do have one thing in that connects us....that is **Lexa**. For me when life is getting me down, or there is infighting within the fandom I ask myself.....

W.W.L.D WHAT WOULD LEXA DO?

The character brings fans together; she is the cement that created the fandom for this fan. Lexa is also a vector of moral and ethical issues, and Pgj1982 uses her as a role model to make her decision, inspired by the narrative of the character and her choices in the show. The support and the newlyfound friendship in the fandom are central and reinforce the sense of belonging among the Clexakru. Nico, a 22yearold female English fan, thanks her fellow members in a heartfelt message for their support after the death of Lexa and thus the end of Clarke and Lexa together. In the conclusion of her thank you note, she pointed out the support in the community: “But i have support and that matters. But thank you once more. Kindness is something that i find much easier to extend than gross traits such as hatred and pettiness; to see it in such

overwhelming numbers was inspirational. Thank you.”

On another Tumblr, a fan posted her support to all her fellow members after the death of Lexa and gave them comfort and advice to handle the pain they might feel, as friends might do in a sad moment:

@ clexa fandom

we're all here for each other, if you need to talk just send a message to a fellow clexa shipper

i love you all and i wish i could give everyone a hug

don't forget to eat and take care of yourself

i hope you find at least one thing on your dash that will make you laugh today.

The friendship that fans might feel in a fandom is linked to the sense of belonging that is particularly strong in those communities, and to the importance of sharing. Sharon Marie Ross (2008) argues that “the sharing involves a reciprocity of listening, allowing for an awareness among spectators of being a part of a collective – a social audience – which brings its own pleasures” (74). Fandoms can thus be considered as both an interpretative community (Radway 1984), in the sense that fans will decode together the meanings of the narrative, and as a social community, in the sense that fans share a social bond. Fans “take pleasures in the fact that they are part of a specialized social audience while also working to defend their text as worthy of a broader social audience” (Ross 2008, 49).

The community is primordial for fans, as it represents a safe haven, a place where they can find people who understand their passion and who will share it with them in various discussions and activities. The creators of *We Deserved Better* underline this aspect and highlight the camaraderie that came to live in the fandom:

There is a special type of bond that can only form when you've been through something particularly rough with someone or have fought at their side. This is something we all shared and that was unique to us. It has fostered camaraderie and sisterhood between people who prior to this may not have directly been interacting with one another and were mostly active in their respective corners of the fandom.

(Bourdaa 2016b)

The virtual space broke the barriers of time and geographical spaces, bringing fans a sense of belonging much wider than before the Internet.

Collecting and Editing: The Wikia and Collective Intelligence

Wikis constructed around TV shows are part of fans' activities that show organizing skills as well as editing skills and a will to collect and compile information on the shows and the

narrative. For Erinoff (2011), “a wiki provides a way to create, nurture and sustain an intellectual community of this nature without its members ever physically coming together by providing them with an asynchronous electronic meeting space” (D1). Paul Booth (2010) explains that “ExtantWikis are databases with organizational principles, ... and user generated archives, which other users can read, add to, delete, change, add pictures or links, revert to an older form, or even delete entirely” (89). In that sense, Wikis fit Pierre Lévy’s definition of collective intelligence, since fans collect and share information, contribute to the editing of the document, and act as social mediators in the community. Lévy explains how collective intelligence created what he calls “cosmopedia,” a collaborative and universal space of thinking: “the members of a thinking community search, inscribe, connect, consult, explore. Not only does the cosmopedia make available to the collective intellect all of the pertinent knowledge available to it at a given moment, but it also serves as a site of collective discussion, negotiation, and development” (Lévy 1997, 217). The 100 Wikia, the section managed by the American fans, counts 356 pages on the wiki⁴ divided into different sections such as characters, episodes, locations, groups, governments, events and links to the narrative of the books, and a transcript of all the episodes that aired. These details underline the comprehensive approach of the stories and worldbuilding by the fans as they manage to cover all of *The 100* on one interactive and collaborative website. This flux of information can be edited or altered at any moment, changing the entire narrative and structure of the wiki, and thus making the database built by the fans malleable. Related to Clexa, a disclaimer from the administrators of the wiki states that the Clarke and Lexa page has been permanently locked to avoid unwanted edits, meaning that only the registered users can change the page. This attempt to undermine the importance of the ship and corrupt the fan page underlines the “war” between shippers of the Clarke and Lexa couple and shippers of the Clarke and Bellamy one, called Bellarke, putting again into perspective some identity issues (lesbians vs. heterosexual fans). This issue is also raised on the Clexacentric Tumblr, when, for example, a fan posted: “Sorry Bellarkes, I don’t want them to be a thing anymore, Clarke and Lexa will forever be meant to be.” The battle between the two subfandoms led to some actions within the Wikia, and the change in “the collaborative authorship” (Booth 2010, 92) of the platform.

But the Wikia is also and above all a symbol of how well organized the fandom is, and how resourceful they are in managing the flux of information, creating ongoing and interactive documents and texts, and socializing in the forum section. They have put together rules and guidelines to create articles, and to use pictures, media, and a template to harmonize all the references and quotations they will use in their articles. They also imagined roles in order to administrate the Wikia. The administrators have extended rights (they are elected to this position based on their skills and knowledge of the show) while the enforcers keep trolls away from the Wikia and fans can only apply to this position when they have shown that they are active users (50 edits at least). Then the Update Team makes sure the information is verified and relevant, especially after a new episode airs, and fans can apply only if they have the support of two other members of the community to back them. This categorization of organizational roles matches the one Ivan Askwith (2009) draws when he analyses players of the *Lost* Alternate Reality Game. For him, players naturally endorsed roles such as organizers

(usually the ones who set up the wiki), detectives (the ones who search for the clues), decoders (the ones who analyze the clues), and lurkers (the nonactive members of the community). But most of all, fans who build the Wikia play two major roles in the fandom. They first act as archaeologists, what Jason Mittell (2009) calls “forensic fandom,” as they constantly search for information, navigating from media platform to media platform, gathering news and intel. Then, they are true cartographers, as they try to reconstruct the narrative of the show and build an encyclopedia of the series. “Rather than being viewed as a *tabula rasa* to be filled and edited by fans, wikis have been seen and used largely as online encyclopedias (likely due to Wikipedia’s popularity)” (Toton 2008). Fans aggregate what they collect from the show, as well as what they understand of it, in one interactive platform—a database constructed by the fans themselves, a testimony of their readings of the show.

The Many Facets of #Clexakru Creativity

Fans’ productivity and creativity are one of the pillars of fandom, which shows how fans interpret and reinterpret texts, create meanings from texts, and share their textual productions in the fandom but also in the public space, via a movement called “spreadable media” (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013). As Jenkins notes, fans’ creativity is exacerbated by a paradox between fascination for the text but also frustration. In the wake of Lexa’s death, this paradox fueled many creations, from fanfiction to GIF sets, from web series to vids. These creations were for the most part posted on Tumblr, a fan favorite interface for the sensation of limitlessness it provides (see Kohnen’s [Chapter 22](#) in this volume), and archived with the hashtags #Clexa, #Clarke x Lexa or #Lexa x Clarke. The affordances of the interface allow fans to post texts, GIF sets, videos, comments, drawings, and make it easy for fans to share the productions via the reblog button. Fans use the culture of remix (Allard 2005) to underline their additive or their transformative comprehension of the texts. This is what Henry Jenkins (2009) coined performance, where fans can actively identify “sites of potential performance in and around the transmedia narrative where they can make their own contributions.” It should be noted, as Louisa Stein (2016) states, that “these fan aesthetic forms did not emerge from nowhere; that is, they’ve evolved out of already existing fan practices, and it is useful to think of them both in relation to previous fan creative traditions and as evolving forms of fan authorship in their own right.” For example, she points out that the creation of GIF sets is a legacy from vidding, since fans use specific parts of the texts and mix them together to create a “new reading or new meaning born of new contexts and juxtapositions.” After Lexa’s death, fans began posting their GIF productions focusing on the moments Clarke and Lexa spent together as a couple or when they ruled together as the Commander and the leader of SkaiKru. Fans chose either to repeat the moment when they finally consummate their love just before Lexa is shot or to put into perspective every moment the two characters met to show how they loved each other. For example, one GIF set on the *We Deserve Better Tumblr* that received 5,591 notes, puts together all the scenes where Lexa and Clarke look at each other from their first encounter in season two to the moment of Lexa’s death in Clarke’s arms in season three, reproducing as the author states “the timeline of their love story,” thus producing a time period for their romance. Some other GIF sets emphasize the importance of Lexa in Clarke’s life by

mixing interviews from actress Eliza Taylor (who plays Clarke) in which she talks about the love Lexa and Clarke felt with scenes of the two characters together. Some fans preferred reworking their GIF sets with actual moments from the show but incorporating new dialogues that create a new meaning and a new context to the scene. Those posts are tagged “The 100 + incorrect quotes” and emphasized on the fantasized sexual attraction of the two characters by the fans, some of them beginning with the words “I want you” or “I want to make sweet, sweet love to you” which come from the interpretation and reading of the fan. Clarkdml posted pictures from moments of the couple in love, with a last picture showing Clarke crying after Lexa dies with this quote from Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night*: “I don’t ask you to love me always like this, but I ask you to remember. Somewhere inside of me there will always be the person I am tonight.” The choice of the quote underlines the literary knowledge of the fan who puts it into perspective, highlighting once again the importance of Lexa in Clarke’s life. Opposite these creations, some works contextualize the love in some alternate universes where Lexa is not dead and the couple live together. For example, fans invented text messages between the characters where they are a couple deciding to adopt cats or puppies. Other examples enact conversations between Raven and Clarke or Octavia and Clarke where the latter announces her engagement and then her wedding to Lexa. As well as AU fanfictions, these creations allow fans to get past their frustration and create a new imaginative world that fits their readings of the show. The characters can thus outlive their death on screen and continue to evolve and develop in alternate universes made up by fans. Vidding is another popular form of creation where fans do a video montage of their favorite scenes set to music. The aesthetics differ from one video to another but this creation shows the technical skills of the fans as they often do elaborate montage edits to make scenes match and fit to the music they have chosen to illustrate the meaning of their video.

Many fan videos in the Clexa fandom put the emphasis on the relationship between the two characters, aggregating scenes from different episodes. For instance, Angie created one of those videos and justified it by saying that she “made this because I miss my heda (Commander Lexa) and I had to...okay? Thanks for watching. P.s: Jason (Rothenberg, the Showrunner), I hate you. P.s 2: Bring Clexa back, thanks.” The frustration of the fans, and the void felt by the fans, are clearly filled by the creation of the montage in which the two characters are still alive. The video montage allows fan to archive the relationship, to hold on to and to watch whenever they want. Some of these videos are multifandom oriented and use footage from *The 100* as well as from *Fear The Walking Dead (FTWD)*, a show in which Alycia Debnam Carey (the actress portraying Lexa) stars. For example, a video entitled “Clexa AU // She found me,”⁵ parallels some scenes from *FTWD* and *The 100* imagining a dialogue on walkie talkie between Lexa and Clarke. At the end of the video, the author chose to edit a moment where Alycia Debnam Carey says “I love you” in *FTWD*, finally vocalizing the words Lexa couldn’t pronounce in *The 100* before she died.

Many fans on Tumblr asked the authors of fanfiction to make the character still alive in their stories, thus erasing the actual moment of her death. “Fan fiction has long been the most popular way of concretizing and disseminating the fans’ passion for a particular fictional universe” (Eate 2015, 22). Fan fiction is a good example of fans’ creativity as they often

rework the source material. This phenomenon also calls out to the polysemy of a text. As Cornel Sandvoss (2005) acknowledges, the polysemy of a text is crucial for audiences to unleash their creativity: “Such approaches assume that the more polysemic a given text, the greater the ability of audiences to evade existing patterns of social and cultural power.” This issue of the polysemy of a text has been widely analyzed by various scholars such as Jenkins, Sandvoss, and Sara Gwenllian Jones (2000). She states that her research on Xena’s fandom has opened up paths to understanding “how fans interpret their chosen television texts, how they relate them to their personal experiences, how they produce subsidiary texts of their own (fanfiction, fan art, fan videos, etc.), and how they form interpretative communities predicated on a common interest in a particular text” (405). On the website fanfiction.net, which compiles texts from fan authors of multiple fandoms, 645 texts are linked to the Clarke and Lexa pairing. Among them, many are tagged AU for Alternate Universes, either in a modern world where, for example, the characters are modern day college students or in *The 100* universe where Lexa didn’t die. The summary for the fanfiction titled “we will make some day together” states that the text is “canon divergent post 3x07,” implying that the text is fanon, directly from the mind of the fans and not using the real canon of the show anymore. With these alternate stories, fans want to resolve the wrongs made in the show and continue the blossoming romance of the two characters they are rooting for. Penelope Eate in her study of *Twilight* fanfiction, analyzed the same issue in authoring the texts: “the authors of *Twilight* fanfic rewrite/right gender wrongs” (Eate 2015, 23) that fans perceived in the saga according to their readings. Buffy46143 puts in her fanfiction of 20 chapters “that day has come” just after the events of 3x07 with a twist “to resolve what it appears will go unresolved on the show (their relationship) while also wrapping up the plots of season 3 in my own way.” Clearly, these fanfiction stories are part of the femslash subgenre, a genre in which authors pair female same-sex characters in erotic stories.

Fans have also artistic and drawing skills that they share in the fandom and on a special website called DeviantArt (see Seymour’s [Chapter 21](#) in this volume). Again using the keyword Clexa in the fan art section of the site, I managed to retrieve 430 works from the fans, some of which had received comments from their fellow members, underlining once again the discussions and the importance of sharing in the community. Fans recreated the story of Lexa and Clarke in a comicbook style, using the codes of the genre, with panels, dialogue bubbles, a serialization mode, and superhero style. The comic *Stupid Clexa* posted in five chapters on DeviantArt, is clearly intended to satisfy the Clexa shippers as it gives an alternate ending to an event that happened on the show. In the comic, the two characters end up having sex, an ending which clearly differs from the canon narrative at that time. The author AjcKorrasami created other drawings using a more manga style in which she makes some crossovers between *The 100* and *Korra*, particularly to explain Lexa’s decision to betray Clarke and the SkaiKru people at the end of season two. Again, as the author tells the fandom, the attempt to draw the situation was to “balance out my frustrations” (AjcKorrasami 2015). The drawings also appear to be a way to counter the anticipation especially after some fans watched the official teasers, like the one where Clarke and Lexa kissed for the first time (2x14). The drawer explains why she decided to work on this: “Oh my gosh I haven’t even gone to the episode where they kissed and I’m already losing my shit. I love these two so much. Clarke looks

innocent but she's viciously sexy. Lexa is badass, but damn is she just so precious! I WILL GO DOWN WITH THIS SHIP!" The drawing shows Lexa, and Clarke's mother Abby being very protective of Clarke. The last panel shows Lexa hugging Clarke very close and saying to Abby "she's in very good hands," while Clarke blushed in front of her mother. This drawing could be seen as an alternate universe at the time it was posted since the kiss hasn't already happened, but once again, it shows how shippers of Clexa define the relationship and were rooting for them since day one.

Finally, a group of fans created *The Clexa Series*, a parodic spin off web series streamed on the YouTube channel of the same name, in which Lexa and Clarke wake up in a modern universe in New York, and have no memories of knowing each other. The web series now numbers five episodes ranging from one minute, 48 seconds for the shortest segment to four minutes, 11 seconds for the longest installment. 120 members are registered to the channel and the first episode was seen by 3,074 people, and led to encouraging comments from the fans asking for episode two. The producers of the web series, fans of the pairing, functioned as a team in situ or on virtual spaces and did all the work from the writing of the web episodes (by a college student in screenwriting), to the acting, the filming, the montage and the post production, showing their artistic and technical skills to produce and diffuse audiovisual content. They also value the interactions with their audience and the fandom; reinforcing the social bond I talked about in the first section, answering questions from Tumblr, Facebook, or Twitter and taking into account comments and suggestions for improving the creative process. For example, on their Facebook page, they post and share sneak peeks from the episodes, behindthescenes footage and pictures, and parts of screenplays to their followers giving them a glimpse of the production process and access to the creativity. In a Q&A session they did on YouTube, the two actresses of the web series admit that the biggest challenge for them was "mimicking the actions and the ways" the two actresses play both characters, but also putting a little of them in impersonating the characters. The idea of the web series came to their minds after a session of cosplay for a Halloween party where they both impersonated Lexa and Clarke. We can see the web series as more of a tribute to the characters in that sense than a parody, the subgenre being more visible in the comic situation of the storylines.

All these examples, from writing fanfiction to producing web series, from creating GIF sets to drawing art, show the vast variety of creative activities in a fandom. But above all, these processes are like worksinprogress in the sense that creative fans share their productions in the fandom and fellow members make comments, suggestions, and reviews that will improve the material. They also prove that fans are expert viewers because they reinterpret the source material and reappropriate the characters. These activities, though visible in other fandoms (fan arts, fanfiction, fan video, Tumblr are representative of any fandoms), are important for the Clexa community especially because they are part of their collective thinking and their will to rewrite what they think went wrong in the show. For them, *The 100* showrunners made a mistake killing Commander Lexa, a symbol of the LGBTQ community, making her death a symbol of misrepresentation of LGBT characters on television, following the long list of dead lesbian and bisexual characters on American scripted shows. These creativities represent a way for them to share their grief and to make the character live again in alternate universes,

and positively think of the character and her relationship with Clarke as a positive symbol for them.

The #Clexa Fandom and Questions of Identity and the Sense of Family

The social bonds and the sense of belonging are clearly strong in this fandom, and can be seen in interactions, creations or actions of social engagement, gluing fans together in this “community of practices” (Baym 1999), and posing the question of identity. The issue of identity was clearly an important point for the lesbian fans because, as I have stated before, the death of Lexa brought a question of representation (or more to the point of misrepresentation) of a minority on TV, continuing a long list of dead lesbians in American TV shows. As I mentioned earlier, this trend is called the Bury Your Gay (or BYG) trope. Since 1976, 165 gay characters have been killed on American scripted TV, often to advance the plot of a straight character, raising concerns and issues of positive representation on TV (Hogan 2016). A fan wrote an open letter to the showrunner voicing how terrified she is for young LGBT people around the world watching shows where gay characters are killed. She described witnessing the death of Tara on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and feeling that there could be no happy ending for gay characters, and by ricochet for her and LGBT people. She ends her letter this way: “I have people I need to fix. I have young LGBT kids that I now have to convince they are good enough, that they are special, that they will get a happy ending...” This fan thinks Lexa was more than a character on TV, she was a reflection of who she is, and who other LGBT people are, and her death will have deep impact on their lives and their identity as a sexual minority. On Tumblr, numerous fans supported each other after the episode aired, giving comfort in the fact that who they are is strong and good. For example, clexasocialmedia wrote: “to my fellow queer women who felt as though they have been punched in the guts after tonight’s episode. Our love is good. It is safe and strong. Our love is breathtaking. ... Our love is more powerful than any CW writer could ever hope to imagine.” She tries to reassure her fellow lesbian fans that everything will be okay and that, despite the trope, they have to continue fighting together. For other fans, the pairing of Clarke and Lexa was a gateway especially for young LGBT people who might be ostracized, different or alienated, a representation of what they feel and who they are in a harsh society, as expressed by this statement: “to all the underage queer kids who aren’t out to their homophobic parents and found solace of seeing Lexa and Clarke in loving each other once a week, I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry, you didn’t deserve this, you deserved so much better, you deserve the world, and I promise that one day we will get there.” As these posts prove, the #Clexa couple was much more than a ship for the fans, it was a matter of representation, that helped young fans identify. And in this context, the fandom, with all the sharing, the social bond, the activities, and the activism, is a place of gathering, a united “family.” Even if they are arguing about which hashtag to trend or which actions to take next, they are a community of individuals with a common interest and goal, engaging in social activities and bringing awareness on social and political issues to the public sphere.

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Notes

¹ On April 11, 2016, he tweeted: "totally hooked on THE 100. Harsh and propulsive."

² Reinforcing the now infamous "Bury the Gay" trope, which details how shows kill gay characters to make straight characters plots advance.

³ Many of the articles referred to the death of Tara in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, where the lesbian character is shot by a stray bullet meant for Willow, just after they have sex. Critics also paralleled the death of Lexa with the death of Denise Cloyd, hit by an arrow out of nowhere that happened the same week in *The Walking Dead*.

⁴ http://the100.wikia.com/wiki/The_100_Wiki last checked on April 20, 2016.

5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hxdDYeMpT4>