

Review: Evangeline Aguas, *Queer Interruptions: Temporality in Femslash Fandom*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025.

Gheorghe Williams
Independent Scholar

In *Queer Interruptions: Temporality in Femslash Fandom* (2025), Evangeline Aguas undertakes an urgent and moving exploration of the ‘Bury Your Gays’ trope: a persistent, painful media trend involving the death of Queer and WLW fictional characters at highly disproportionate rates, and often at cruel narrative junctures. Responding to one particularly controversial iteration of the trope – the death of lesbian character Lexi in the popular TV series, *The 100* (The CW, 2014-2020) – Aguas explores the patterns of distress reported by Queer female and non-binary/genderfluid fans of the show, and how the Bury Your Gays trope, also called ‘Dead Lesbian Syndrome’, inflicts what Aguas calls ‘time-travelling wounds’: a phenomenon in which the encoded anti-queerness of media tropes returns fans to their own pasts by resurrecting the negative affect(s) of their previous encounters with queerphobic social and ideological structures. The result is a timely, thoroughly researched and deeply self-reflexive study, which also benefits from an innovatively transmedial composition: the printed monograph is accompanied by a documentary featuring interviews with self-proclaimed ‘Clexa’ fans, as well as an interactive website through which users can engage with audio-visual content from the documentary in a non-linear form; the book’s chapters also contain URLs and QR codes linking with corresponding scenes from the documentary film, so that audiences can generate bespoke, affective encounters with Aguas’s ethnographic testimonial data.

Structurally, the first three chapters provide a generous foundation for the book, each illustrating the project’s impetus more compellingly than the last. An introductory discussion of the fateful ‘307’ (3.07 of *The 100*) provides an outline of the episode and the ensuing fallout, situating the controversy within a host of other examples of the trope to illustrate its pervasiveness and the real-world stakes of its impact on Queer folks not only in adolescence, but well into adulthood. Chapter 2, ‘The Ideal Fan vs. The Rest of Us’, examines the entrenched nature of Queer fanhood denigration (and particularly of Queer fans of colour), highlighting how ‘the contemporary queer fan negotiates multiple sites of inclusion and alienation’ (Aguas, 2025: 26), not only from mainstream culture but also from within fandom’s own subcultural spaces. Chapter 3, ‘A Queer Ethnography’, outlines the methodological ethos of the study, explaining the study’s avoidance of textual-analytical models used in influential queer theoretical texts like Edelman’s *No Future* (2004) and Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia* (2009), in

favour of ethnographic research into how 'abstract queer theory ... manifests in [the] lived experience' (Aguas, 2025: 29) of Queer female/genderfluid fan communities.

The opening chapters assemble as a robust conceptual framework that will prime readers for engaging with later material while also serving as useful critical touchstones in their own right. However, readers will find that Chapters 4 ('Queer Disorientations: Delay and Extended Adolescence') and 5 ('Queer Death Onscreen: Anachronism, Bad Feelings, and Melancholia'), by far the book's lengthiest sections, are also its most significant contributions. Drawing on recorded interviews and reported testimonials, Aguas begins to examine, in moving detail, the harmful impact of the Bury Your Gays trope upon the worldview and wellbeing of Queer female fans. In Chapter 4, Aguas explores how the 'chrononormativity' of mainstream culture leaves Queer fans doubly abject: as Queer people who are ostracised by the repressive cultural dominance of 'straight time', producing experiences of 'belatedness' (e.g., the deferral of relationships, education, employment, etc.) not routinely encountered by their heterosexual peers; and as Queer *fans* who are infantilised by mainstream culture as communities defined by their perceived failure to fully graduate into 'productive' (read: heteronormative) adulthood. Nonetheless, Aguas (2025: 61) illustrates how her respondents' inhabitation of the 'arrhythmia' of Queer time also affords them a radical haven and vantage point: 'queer fans continue to challenge, disrupt, interrupt, and flout persistent heterotemporalities ... generat[ing] new visions of maturity and adulthood not tied to the linearity of straight time'.

Chapter 5 likewise addresses the 'bad feelings' conjured by media representations of LGBTQ+ deaths which replicate the age-old mantra that Queer lives can never be happy ones. Here, analysis focuses on how Queer fans' 'wounded' responses to such tropes can constitute generative expressions of 'Queer melancholy', an important aspect of resistance to the anti-queerness of dominant culture, inspiring public and direct acts of political defiance (such as one respondent's organisation of a 'ClexaCon' panel focusing on exclusionary fan practices and racist media norms) as well as private acts of creative redress, with large online archives of fan-made fiction and creative work through which fans can visualise and pursue alternative Queer life paths. The book's final two chapters reflect upon the Queer Interruptions project as a whole: Chapter 6, 'Queer Interruptions: A Fan Gift and Queer Archive of Feelings', explains how the disorderly interfaces of the Queer Interruptions web-site are both a gift to Queer fans, providing a cultural space in which to engage with LGBTQ+ media communities, and an archive of those very community formations; finally, Chapter 7, 'Life After Death (on Repeat)', concludes by pointing towards the continued life (and stakes) of the trope.

At times, *Queer Interruptions* can suffer from the sheer weight and breadth of the theoretical material it handles. In later chapters, the cultural relevance of Lexa's controversial death – an event which forms the impetus and critical nucleus of the study as a whole – is occasionally smothered by the volumes of critical perspectives brought in to illuminate its significance. Furthermore, there are some instances where Aguas over-(re)iterates the sentiments readers are intended to derive from the work; generalised references to the endurance of traumatic pasthoods, while never irrelevant to the material, are sometimes reasserted too frequently, to the point of losing their charge. Even so, the key strength of *Queer Interruptions* – its balance of keen critical insight, audio-visual material and the affective power of testimony – outweighs any such textual snags. Indeed, by using *The 100*'s Lexi as a tethering point for the book's chapters, Aguas provides a remarkably nuanced critique of the disparate scales of impact (from momentary to life-long) that negative forms of representation will impose on their audiences across time, cultures and generations. Moreover, by combining

print, audio-visual and digital media forms, Aguas illustrates how audience studies, fandom studies and Queer theory can be creatively integrated as a generative site for dissecting the harmful effects of today's cultural artefacts, and for engaging with (and learning from) those who consume, partake in, and (re)create them. For scholars and students as well as general readers, Aguas has produced a robust critical resource that will remain timely and relevant for as long as the regressive media tropes under its scrutiny continue to pervade our screens.

Biographical Note

Gheorghe Williams holds a PhD in Drama and Theatre Studies from the University of Birmingham. His first monograph, *Gothic Political Drama: Power and Peril on the Contemporary British Stage*, is forthcoming. His wider research interests include Queer and ecocritical performance practices and their intersections with Gothic culture. He is Reviews Editor for the *Revenant* journal.

Contact: gheorghe.l.williams@gmail.com

References

- Aguas, E (2025), *Queer Interruptions: Temporality in Femslash Fandom*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Edelman, L (2004), *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Muñoz, JE (2009), *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York: New York University Press.

Audio-visual references

- The 100*, The CW, 2014-2020.
- The 100*, (3.07 '307', The CW).