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YouTube as De Facto Lesbian Archive: Global Fandom, Online Viewership and Vulnerability

Abstract

Using international soap operas as a key site of inquiry, this essay interrogates the potential of YouTube to function as a generative space for the archiving and distribution of global lesbian televisual representations. The curatorial practices that evince this aspect of the video hosting site's potentiality are borne out of longstanding fan behaviors, yet are indicative of new modes of viewership and connectivity that are integrally linked to recent technological advancements. The potential value a repository of lesbian media might offer to niche communities, alongside its vulnerability to IP claims and other threats to accessibility, mark this potential archive as both indispensable and extremely vulnerable.

Brittana. Calzona. Minx.¹ The aforementioned portmanteaus are derived from a lexicon that spans diverse lesbian fandoms and are the preferred nomenclature for referencing some of American broadcast television's lesbian pairings whose storylines are frequently re-circulated through Internet-based digital platforms. Perhaps less familiar to U.S. audiences are: PepSi, Crisabel, Naomily, Jemma and Marbecca; couples from Spain, Britain, and Germany respectively.² In recent years not only have televisual lesbian representations quantitatively and qualitatively improved, they have also achieved a new level of visibility and mobility due, in part, to the digitization of media and the proliferation of video hosting and social media websites. Importantly, both of these developments significantly amplified the footprint of the products of fan labor that often introduce these couples to new, and increasingly foreign, audiences.

Unlike practices of slash vidding which “render queer dimensions [...] visible by telling stories of same-sex romance [...] through sophisticated viewing and editing techniques,” the video texts under consideration here are those which excise and collate manifest lesbian representations from their original context into discretely focused

narratives.³ Termed “queer cutting” by Frederik Dhaenens, these videos are constructed such that “the embedded storylines are reduced and altered in comparison to the original episodes, and the role [of the lesbian characters] is enlarged [...] As such, the only characters that are fully depicted are [lesbians], making them the most complex and layered characters in the fan-produced text.”⁴ While these condensed texts have much in common with newly developing processes for creating “viewer curated narratives,” it is the ability of these lesbian webisodes to establish an archive and serve as a locus for community-building on a global level rather than their status as curated objects that is particularly generative. Carefully classified for searchability via the tagging function on YouTube and appended to hashtags for increased visibility on Twitter, Tumblr and other social media sites, the contemporary methods for the deployment of these designations online mark the melding of technologically advanced social behaviors with long extant fan practices. This labor also produces specific forms of community and enables the collection of fugitive representations. These changes, when taken together, indicate a marked shift in content consumption and television connectivity.

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TV Lesbians & Soaps — Salvage & Spread

When compared with the prevailing heteronormativity of television, the number of lesbian representations on American television is miniscule. This limited pool becomes even smaller when one considers longstanding, continually developed relationships, and bypasses sweeps week kisses and sensationalized limited-episode story arcs. If these constraints were put in place while attempting to catalogue lesbian stories, the register would be very short. For U.S. non-premium television the list would essentially be limited to the relationships of Kerry on *ER*, Bianca on *All My Children*, Olivia on *Guiding Light*, Callie on *Grey's Anatomy*, Santana on *Glee*, Emily on *Pretty Little Liars* and, recently, Stef and Lena on *The Fosters*.⁵ While the TV storylines of lesbians in European and British Commonwealth countries are also a minor presence, including them in an accounting of lesbian televisual representation significantly expands the number of characters and stories that might be archived using solely North American representations. Moreover, given the number of countries whose productions are relevant, such an account has the potential to shift the perception of the U.S. as a media vanguard, at least in terms of lesbian representation.⁶

Aside from the already limited number of lesbian characters and stories, their potential reach is further diminished by particularities of the medium to which they belong. Owing to its live broadcast origins, television's status as an ephemeral medium is well established. Although the advent of video allowed for industrial preservation, archival copies were made selectively and according to unspoken cultural hierarchies.⁷ Consumers, en masse, did not have ready access to television collections until the DVD boom in the Nineties.⁸ Before then, TV artifacts were most often and most thoroughly collected through the dutiful actions of fans who had mastered the unwieldy programming menus of VCRs. This is particularly true of disparaged genres such as the soap opera; however, for soaps in particular, one of the most salient factors working against their preservation was the massive amount of content produced, as year-round, daily programs. As a result, despite the revolutionary impact of DVDs

and now digital streaming upon the longevity of TV programming, many of the lesbian couplings under consideration still risk fading into the ether because they come from the world of soap opera. An occurrence which is all the more astounding given the history of the American genre's aversion to the depiction of homosexual relationships. Although *All My Children*, for example, had been on the air since 1970, its first lesbian relationship didn't occur until the fall of 2000. This couple's first kiss was the first in daytime television.⁹

Soap operas are, even in today's digital, peer-to-peer world, very difficult to obtain outside of their original broadcast windows. In the United States, the cable channel SoapNet rebroadcast episodes and aired weekend marathons, but as of December 31, 2013, that channel ceased to exist, eliminating one of the few legitimate alternative points of encounter.¹⁰ Still, due to the shifting economies of TV production, some American soaps have recently transitioned onto digital platforms. Specifically, after the recent wave of cancellations of broadcast soap operas and the rebirth of some online, shows such as *All My Children* and *One Life to Live* are being made available in streaming format on Hulu and for purchase on iTunes.¹¹ This, however, is the exception. Most soap operas in the U.S. and around the globe are not available for purchase. Still, it is increasingly common for these shows to be available by streaming through the websites of content owners. For example, episodes of the German soap operas *Hand aufs Herz* and *Verbotene Liebe* are uploaded daily, in their entirety, and are kept online for several days greatly extending the potential viewing window.

Internet streaming, therefore, has proved essential to the curatorial and archival impulses of niche fan communities, as online distribution has allowed savvy users to transform and circulate relevant media with greater ease. The combination of streaming video recorders and virtually limitless digital storage capacity thus offers the potential to easily capture, store, and re-distribute a genre of media that has, to date, been resistant to these processes. Beyond generic marginalization, these capabilities are also allowing fans to rescue and preserve generative and meaningful lesbian representations whose value is further discounted within an already disparaged form. The soap opera

lesbian is, after all, a fugitive figure given the genre's long-standing hostility to difference. For, as C. Lee Harrington has asserted, "US daytime soaps have been particularly resistant to depictions of 'otherness' of any kind, whether racial, ethnic, sexual or religious: the genre spotlights straight, white, conventionally attractive, comfortably middle class, vaguely Christian characters and communities."¹² Therefore, when these media are transformed into products of fan labor, such as queer cut webisodes, and are circulated online, video hosting sites then begin to function as repositories for media that still remain outside of traditional hierarchies of value. As a result, the life of these televisual representations is extended, shorter character arcs within massive bodies of work are rescued from oblivion, and these stories are marked as worthy of preservation.¹³

Online Viewership and Soap Opera Fandom - Past as Prelude

While some very interesting things are occurring with fan behavior and viewership surrounding the texts at hand, it's important to situate these behaviors within the longer history of soap opera fan practices to which they are indebted. The tendency to "ship" a particular pairing within the often-expansive character communities of the soap is not new. One of the earliest and best-known instances arose around *General Hospital's* couple Luke and Laura in the early 1980s.¹⁴ Some of the couple's biggest fans taped each episode and developed their own archives that exclusively commemorated their specific storyline. In addition to fan devotion to particular characters and couplings, a number of industrial changes to soap opera production have amplified these behaviors. As Melissa Scardaville has argued:

Declining budgets meant core characters could not be used as often, which weakened their ties to others and which diluted the character's identity. Budget cuts also meant that it was more advantageous to use the same small set of characters who only have ties to each other and not the larger community. This approach conditions the audience to watch for specific characters and/or

couples and to not be invested in the soap as a larger town.¹⁵

These changes to the diegesis of soap operas make the process of excision even easier. Fans are able to create concise narratives which privilege their favorite lesbian characters without losing narrative coherence because of the way that characters, and their storylines, are compartmentalized.

Still, while these behaviors are tied to long-standing fan practices, the behaviors under examination here are notable for their lack of devotion to the individual programs. While it is true that some fans, following the example above, were devoted to the Luke and Laura storyline exclusively, their attachments to the couple most often developed through extended viewing of *General Hospital*. The fans that develop and maintain the YouTube channels for specific lesbian couples, themselves, do not differ much in this regard. However, when the products of their individual labors are aggregated on a site like YouTube, it shifts the relationship that others have with the source content. This is because the couples, which are discovered and followed on secondary sites, have been culled from the mass of global television programming by fans around the world that then archive them for an imagined global lesbian niche. Thus, fans whose relationships to the characters are established via alternative distribution outlets like YouTube are primarily devoted to specific characters and couplings, exhibiting a free-floating engagement to the characters and storylines when compared with more traditional modes of television consumption based on specific programs and episodes. The show, the network, the advertisements, each of which are integral elements of the television experience, are all virtually absent.¹⁶

Here, then, YouTube not only fosters the storage and dissemination of marginalized storylines, but is also generative of an alternative viewership practice where particular arcs are disentangled from their grounding in larger story worlds. This mode of viewing is further intensified by the narrative structures deployed on television around lesbian characters. That is, in addition to the industrial shifts occurring within soap opera production discussed previously, with

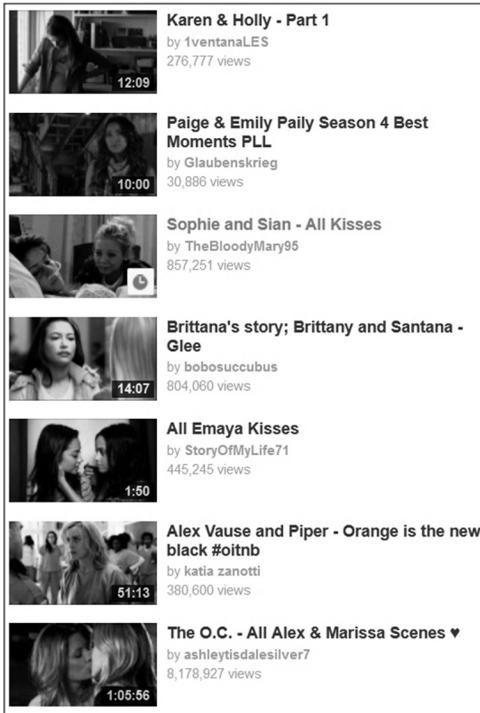


Fig. 1: YouTube’s recommendation algorithm reveals a pattern of viewership characterized by temporal and geographic mobility. The above example includes two U.K. and several U.S. couples. Some stories are ongoing, while others such as ‘Marisa & Alex,’ concluded in 2005.

the exception of a few fully developed and fully integrated couples, most programs include lesbian characters in the form of shorter story arcs that are encapsulated within several episodes. This means that, again, lesbian-centered narratives are readily excised from the larger diegesis.

As a result, since secondary site viewers are not anchored to specific programs, the labor of attention is lessened and can more easily spread to similar representations regardless of complexity of the piece of originating content.¹⁷ This is because encountering new couples via YouTube minimizes the “hump factor” viewers typically encounter as they begin to watch a new program.¹⁸ Channel owners typically provide the required context and site users often answer any additional questions new viewers may have. Since the investment is so minimal, users often recommend similar representations that would appeal to other viewers.

The communal discussion and suggestion-giving thus fosters the consumption of multiple couples from completely different contexts, a pattern which is visualized by the listing of videos in the recommendation panel that is positioned alongside the video being watched. This is because YouTube’s video recommendation system uses algorithms to analyze the consumption patterns of users who are signed in. As Davidson et al. report, the site “makes use of a well-known technique known as association rule mining or co-visitation counts. [This method] consider[s] sessions of user watch activities on the site” to determine how often videos are watched together and thereby glean their degree of relatedness.¹⁹

While these processes often produce recommendations for related videos of the pairing in the original video being watched, the algorithms also produce recommendations for other videos of different lesbian storylines since they are based upon the viewing habits of the niche audience viewing these videos. That the algorithms’ recommendations move between these various couples attests to the attentional mobility of the viewership practices associated with these lesbian webisodes. Put simply, using the recommendation panel, which is in turn based upon “watch activities,” a user can begin with an ongoing storyline, like Marlene and Rebecca from Germany’s *Verbotene Liebe*, catch up on a storyline, like Sophie and Sian from the UK’s *Coronation Street*, which has recently concluded and then go a decade into the past to watch the narrative which led to American soap opera’s first lesbian kiss between Bianca and Lena on *All My Children*. Therefore, while these fan practices are clearly linked to longstanding behaviors, their manifestation on video hosting sites with social media functions has produced its own distinctive traits; viewership that is unanchored, hyper-mobile, and immediately subject to the input of complex algorithms.

Marlene & Rebecca: Because It’s Love

The significance of these evolving online behaviors can also be seen in the responses of certain producers. One clear example is with German television station ARD’s soap opera *Verbotene Liebe*. *Verbotene Liebe* (*VL*), which means forbidden

UFA HOME **PRODUKTIONEN** COMPANY PRESSE KARRIERE KONTAKT SPOTLIGHTS

WEIL ES LIEBE IST ... - MARLENE & REBECCA

Mit „Weil es Liebe ist ... - Marlene & Rebecca“ startet die erste transmediale Webserie exklusiv auf dem neuen „Verbotene Liebe“-YouTube-Channel.

PRODUKTIONEN

ÜBERSICHT
SENDETERMINE
AKTUELL IM DREH
DAILY DRAMA

WEIL ES LIEBE IST ... - MARLENE & REBECCA

Format	Neue Medien
Produktionsfirma	Grundy UFA TV Produktions GmbH
Drehzeit	17.12.2012 - 21.12.2012

PRODUKTIONSSUCHE

ERWEITERTE SUCHE >

Fig. 2: GrundyUFA promotion of Weil es Liebe ist on its website. http://www.ufa.de/produktionen/new_media/weil_es_liebe_ist_marlene_rebecca/ (November 20, 2013)

love, has had a number of gay storylines since its debut in 1995. Aside from the sheer number and duration of these stories, the producers’ handling of these couples’ stories has been, at least within the accepted norms of soaps, realistic and endearing. As a result, the storylines of several of their gay couples, both male and female, have been highly circulated on YouTube and other video hosting sites.

One such storyline, which developed during the spring and summer of 2012, was the budding love affair between Rebecca Von Lahnstein and Marlene Von Lahnstein (Marbecca). Despite the same last name, no incest was involved, rather, in true soap opera fashion, Marlene’s surname is a vestige of her previous marriage to one of Rebecca’s brothers. Although divorced, when the hints of romance began between the two women, Marlene was already involved with another of Rebecca’s brothers. Through the diligent work of the owners of YouTube channels such as “Mittag1234” and

“Novemberstern” and various subtitlers, their story was faithfully captured, indexed, translated, and archived. Videos were typically posted within a day or two of the original broadcast with subtitles in various languages added as they became available. In addition to subtitles, the videos were archived by date and episode number and relevant background information was condensed from numerous episodes into several back story webisodes so that new viewers could quickly catch up with the narrative. Their efforts made Marbecca available to thousands of viewers, in their native languages, around the globe and the resultant popularity drew the attention of *VL*’s production team.

Although the producers of *VL* had already demonstrated their awareness of LGBT fans with their development of a video blog for the previous romance between the Christian and Oliver characters (Chrolli), with Marbecca, the producers’ actions were even more attuned to online fan behavior. Much like the fan produced

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webisodes under consideration, GrundyUFA produced an official Marbecca web series entitled “Weil Es Liebe Ist (Because It Is Love) - Marlene & Rebecca” (*WeLi*). The producers positioned the series as follows:

WeLi is the first transmedia web series launched exclusively on the new *VL* YouTube channel. Produced by GrundyUFA’s digital drama department, *WeLi* extends the current storyline of the lesbian relationship of series characters Marlene and Rebecca on the net. Thus, the web series takes advantage of original programming and serves as a brand extension for the TV series *VL*. In addition to the transmedia storytelling on TV and on YouTube, the web series has a third channel: for the launch of *WeLi* there will be a Facebook account of the two figures. [...] GrundyUFA has produced the web series [...] on behalf of the audience. ‘Due to the national and international success of our gay stories [...] we feel thankful for our very active fan communities every day. The *VL* YouTube channel will now meet the desire for more stories on the Internet. The web series is a thank you to our loyal fans,’ said Guido Reinhardt, CCO and producer of GrundyUFA. The five-part web series [...] runs from 17 December to 21 December, and is internationally available exclusively on the *VL* YouTube channel. Weil es Liebe...²⁰

Of particular note here is the producers’ reference to “the desire for more stories on the Internet.” This in combination with the fact that the web series was exclusively available on the show’s official YouTube channel demonstrates the impact that the online behaviors under discussion here have had on the show itself. Such an impact not only demonstrates the importance of these fan labors to a niche lesbian audience, but by creating this archive online, the ready access to viewership analytics makes this demographic visible to content producers in concrete ways. The economic viability of content produced for this demographic was similarly affirmed when the popular *Otalia* coupling from *Guiding Light* migrated online and was successfully reborn, with new character names,

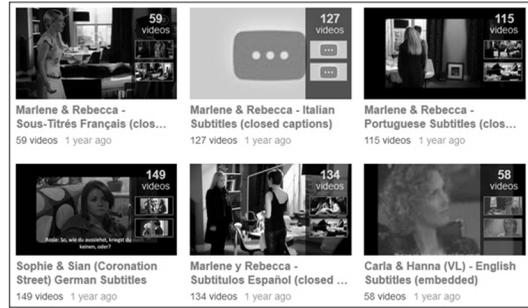


Fig. 3: Translations of the Marbecca Storyline on the ‘Novemberstern’ YouTube channel. The version with Italian subtitles has been blocked. <http://www.youtube.com/user/Novemberstern75/videos?view=1&flow=grid> (November 19, 2013)

on the fee-based web series *Venice*.

High-Tech Fandom and Community

While it is true that these practices began with the fans, it is important to acknowledge the role played by technological advancements. First and foremost, video hosting sites permit a new level of ease when it comes to the accessing, storage, and distribution of televisual content. In addition, translation software has greatly reduced the language barriers that have often limited the mobility of media texts. Given this, while fansubbing is a well-documented practice, when videos are uploaded to YouTube these efforts are redoubled via the site’s own translation software. As Rick Burgess reported, in 2012 YouTube added “automated caption translation for 300 languages,” this is in addition to the site’s established ability to “provide automatic caption generation using Google Translate’s speech-to-text abilities,...mak[ing] it even easier to provide captions to a global audience.”²¹ This is a clear instance of technology facilitating and augmenting fan practices. Burgess notes succinctly, “As video uploaders continue to make use of this tool...what was once an ostensibly useless, indecipherable foreign video to one user may now actually hold informational value to that person.”²² Here that value is a reduction of the labor required to increase accessibility and legibility for lesbian texts whose value to traditional media is limited but for whom there exists a globally distributed niche interest.

While these efficiencies can be seen as



Fig. 4: The Novemberstern 'Marlene & Rebecca' Discussion page marks the communal function of this tentative niche archive. As can be seen above, user comments are in multiple languages and direct fellow viewers to other sites where the story may be continued. <http://www.youtube.com/user/Novemberstern75/discussion> (November 19, 2013)

benefitting all who possess the technological tools for participation, YouTube also affords a unique opportunity for niche audiences to build community. In terms of a broadly construed online lesbian niche, television representations shared through YouTube can be viewed as fostering community for this niche in several ways. First, YouTube allows for the wide dissemination of niche storylines with traditionally limited access. Secondly, YouTube, via Google's immense server farms, allows users unlimited upload capability. Since users can upload as many videos as they wish, YouTube allows for the archiving of these niche-interest storylines in their entirety. Finally, YouTube's evolving comment and discussion pages allow conversations about this content to develop. Communal behaviors are thus exhibited when users discuss the couple depicted in the channel's videos, direct fellow watchers to other internet sites such as Tumblr and Facebook via the posting of links, as well as through the discussion of other similar couples that have been archived on YouTube.

The Tenuous Archive

For all of the aforementioned reasons there is a lot

to be gained from the establishment of an online, readily accessible archive of lesbian storylines. Still, it is important to acknowledge the inherent vulnerability of using a corporate site with high regard for traditional notions of copyright to house this repository. Given this, intellectual property law is an exceedingly important factor in assessing the potential stability of this archive. By turning to PepSi and Crisabel, two of Spain's most loved couples we can see just how tenuous the durability of such an archive can be when the potential openness of a site like YouTube meets with differing approaches to copyright. The story of Pepa and Silvia (PepSi), from Antena 3's *Los Hombres de Paco*, can almost always be found in its entirety on YouTube despite periodic channel suspensions. While the content is still subject to YouTube's search algorithms, it is quite possible that its persistent availability is linked to the fairly congenial relationship that exists between YouTube and Antena 3. In fact, since 2007, it has partnered with YouTube in the maintenance of an official Antena 3 channel on the video hosting site. In contrast, despite being an extremely popular pairing, Crisabel, from Telecinco's *Tierra de Lobos*, is very difficult to find. Unlike Antena 3, Telecinco has aggressively pursued the Crisabel queer cuts posted on YouTube, blocking them as violations of copyright law. This is most likely due to the history of acrimonious dealings between Telecinco and YouTube. Specifically, in 2008, "Gestevisión Telecinco SA, owner of Spain's most-watched television station," sued Google for "refus[ing] to take action to avoid postings of illicit videos."²³ Despite the fact that the case was ultimately dismissed in 2010, YouTube's Content ID program allows copyright holders to determine what occurs when their content is posted, thus helping to achieve Telecinco's desired outcome – the blocking of their programs on YouTube.²⁴

Even when uploads are not deleted it is often the case that certain YouTube videos are not viewable due to geo-protection. This means that the site frequently blocks content by country in order to honor licensing agreements, which are geographically determined. As a result, certain videos that are posted can be viewed in certain locations and not others. However, despite such barriers, newly affordable technologies such

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as virtual private network (VPN) subscription services, which allow one to mask and shift the IP address of a given computer, allow savvy users to achieve access no matter where they are physically located. Such technologies are also what often facilitate access by foreign fans to streaming content on official websites. From there fans use various software programs, to collect, transform, and distribute the desired media.

Aside from geo-blocking, another reason this archive is so unstable is because these videos largely maintain audio-visual fidelity to the source content and are thus easily detected by YouTube's search algorithms. That is to say, despite the omission of certain sections of a given episode, extended portions remain intact and unaltered. In reality, the most significant transformation these videos perform is upon the narrative hierarchy rather than upon the clips of content themselves.²⁵ This makes the texts within this archive particularly vulnerable since, as media advocacy groups such as the aptly entitled Organization for Transformative works (OTW) suggest, the usage of media content within fan produced works is often legitimized as original due to the transformative labor used to create them.²⁶ Still, the modifications made in service of foregrounding the lesbian storylines are indeed transformational; they center those who most often exist on the margins.

As a result, a more useful framework for this mode of production is John Hartley's concept of 'redaction'. For Hartley, redaction is a "mode of cultural meaning...[where]...new material [is produced] by the process of editing existing content."²⁷ The cultural meaning at stake here is one in which the traditional heteronormative orientation of television is inverted. While there is great value in that reorganization for certain audiences, it is also yet another reason that storing this archive on a publicly accessible video hosting site is problematic. Since YouTube allows the public to police content, site users who find lesbian content offensive can flag these videos as

inappropriate. Even if YouTube's staff determines that the video does not violate its posting regulations, the video may still end up becoming age-restricted, limiting the potential audience even when character interactions are not explicit. Thus, paradoxically, the trade-off for the wide-dissemination a site like YouTube makes possible is the simultaneous restriction of accessibility.

Conclusion

Despite the precarious position of these videos, for lesbian audiences in search of representations reflective of their interests, these webisodes increase the reward paid for the labor of watching. Unlike the manipulations of the attention economy that often occur when programs include suggestions of lesbianism to create buzz and generate interest, posted videos have already been vetted for quality.²⁸ Moreover, due to its global availability, and the similar scarcity of well-rounded lesbian storylines on television around the world, YouTube, as de facto archive, has become a site for the preservation of and community building around global lesbian representations. Although lesbian televisual representation is still deficient on a number of levels, the aforementioned fan behaviors are arguably creating a new space where lesbian characters are foregrounded. At the same time, these practices are shifting viewers' relationships to source content and producers' modes of audience outreach. How these processes will continue to develop will be greatly impacted by the course of IP law and attitudes toward remix culture and fan labor. In their recent work *Spreadable Media*, Henry Jenkins et al. argue that rather than blocking fan behaviors in ways attributed to antiquated, one-to-many business models, progressive-minded content owners will realize that perhaps the best path forward is to embrace the increasing proclivity toward the sharing of media.²⁹ With regard to the case at hand, innovative solutions have much to offer both producers and audiences.

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Notes

- 1 Brittna = Brittany + Santana (*Glee*, Fox, US); Calzona = Callie + Arizona (*Grey's Anatomy*, ABC, US); Minx = Marissa + Bianca [Binx] (*All My Children*, ABC, US).
- 2 Pepsí = Pepa + Silvia (*Los Hombres de Paco*, Antena 3, Spain); Crisabel = Cristina + Isabel (*Tierra de Lobos*, Telecinco, Spain); Naomily = Naomi + Emily (*Skins*, E4, UK); Jemma = Jenny + Emma (*Hand aufs Herz*, Sat 1, Germany); Marbecca = Marlene + Rebecca (*Verbotene Liebe*, ARD, Germany).
- 3 Julie Levin Russo, "User-Penetrated Content: Fan Video in the Age of Convergence," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 126, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25619735>.
- 4 Frederik Dhaenens, "Queer Cuttings on YouTube: Re-editing Soap Operas as a Form of Fan-Produced Queer Resistance," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15, no. 4 (2012): 448-9, doi: 10.1177/1367549412442205.
- 5 While reality television has become an important site for lesbian representation on television I am particularly concerned here with scripted programming. I am also particularly concerned with non-premium television because of the way in which, as Julia Himberg has argued, lesbian content has been vital to multicasting strategies. Julia Himberg, "Multicasting: Lesbian Programming and the Changing Landscape of Cable TV," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 10 (2013): 1-16, doi: 10.1177/1527476412474351. While such content is also potentially useful to broadcast in drawing what Ron Becker has called the slumpy demographic, this particular demographic is not the target of soap operas. Ron Becker, *Gay TV & Straight America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006).
- 6 Additional non-U.S. couples include, among others: Kim and Sugar (*Sugar Rush*, E4, UK), Jess and Alex (*Mistresses*, BBC, UK), Bo and Lauren (*Lost Girl*, Showcase, Canada), Nicole and Maia (*Shortland Street*, TV2, New Zealand).
- 7 Lynn Spigel, "Our TV Heritage: Television, the Archive, and the Reasons for Preservation," *A Companion to Television* ed. Janet Wasko. Blackwell Reference Online (2005): doi 10.1111/b.97814051000946.2005.00005.x
- 8 Some highly regarded programs could be ordered on VHS during the 1980s, but the selection was extremely limited. Films, both mainstream and pornographic, were most often the subject matter of commercially-available VHS. Moreover, the height of VHS sales predate the consumption/preservation trend which DVD marketing was able to foster/tap into.
- 9 See *inter alia*: C. Lee Harrington, "Lesbian(s) on Daytime Television: The Bianca Narrative on *All My Children*," *Feminist Media Studies* 3, no. 2 (2003): 207-28, doi: 10.1080/1468077032000119326.
- 10 Meg James, "Disney's SOAPnet Channel Headed for the Drain," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 9, 2013, Accessed Nov 15, 2013. <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/cotown/la-fi-ct-disney-soapnet-20131109,0,3311291.story#axzz2k1pJ5eXJ>.
- 11 Importantly, the shows offered are only from the current, online-only versions of the shows. Nothing is available from previously broadcast seasons.
- 12 Harrington, "Lesbian(s)," 207.
- 13 It is important to acknowledge, here, that there is a valid, but unexamined queer critique, which would rightfully interrogate the exclusive depiction of what Bonnie Dow has termed the 'user-friendly' lesbian in all of the texts under consideration. Bonnie Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 2 (2001): 123-40. Moreover, as C. Lee Harrington has argued, "this particular 'version' of lesbian identity and sexuality may constitute another key condition of represent-ability for homosexuality on daytime soaps." C. Lee Harrington, "Lesbian(s)," 216. Still, despite the fact that these limitations elide certain representations of queerness, communal behaviors have arisen around these texts which not only makes them valuable to the niche communities in which they circulate, but to analyses of reception, consumption and distribution.
- 14 Edward J. Whetmore and Alfred P. Kielwasser, "The Soap Opera Audience Speaks: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of American Culture* (01911813), 6 no. 3 (1983): 110.
- 15 Melissa Scardaville, "The Survival of Soap Opera (Part One): The State of the American Soap," *HenryJenkins.org*, last updated December, 2010, accessed September 25, 2013, henryjenkins.org/2010/12/the_survival_of_soap_opera_par.html.
- 16 One mode of response within YouTube's ContentID program allows content owners to monetize their IP within YouTube. As a result, more and more of these queer cuts are being accompanied by introductory advertisements.
- 17 By 'secondary site' I am attempting to reference viewership that occurs outside of the distribution channels of content owners.
- 18 Whetmore and Kielwasser's term "hump factor" describes the investment of labor required to learn the complex histories of characters within the story world of soap operas. Edward J. Whetmore and Alfred P. Kielwasser, 110.
- 19 James Davidson, Benjamin Liebal, Junning Liu, Palash Nandy, and Taylor Van Vleet, "The YouTube Video Recommendation System," *RecSys '10: Proceedings of the fourth ACM conference on Recommender systems*, (New York: ACM, 2010): 293-296. Accessed Dec 5, 2013, http://stuyresearch.googlecode.com/hghistory/b17_661bbf4905a2078902f1abe6b795d4a29137/blake/resources/p293-davidson.pdf.
- 20 "Weil Es Liebe Ist," *GrundyUFA*, accessed November 20, 2013, http://131.253.14.66/proxy.aspx?h=1T87emNXLMEHZEgc6TawmBckAwTEGufc&a=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ufa.de%2Fproduktionen%2Fnew_media%2Fweil_es_liebe_ist__marlene_rebecca%2F. Translated by Microsoft Translator.
- 21 Rick Burgess, "YouTube adds automated caption translation for 300 languages," *TechSpot.com*, September 26, 2012, accessed November 18, 2013, <http://www.techspot.com/news/50295-youtube-adds-automated-caption-translation-for-300-languages.html>.
- 22 Burgess, "Automated Caption."
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- 28 This screening process is extremely valuable because, as Julia Himberg has argued, "Lesbian sexuality...has emerged as a significant method for creating 'edgy' programming and attracting a wide range of viewers to cable TV. This strategy[...]is a calculated approach to attracting audiences to cable programming based on demographics constructed and refined by market research." Julia Himberg, "Multicasting," 2.
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