

“I am also a we”: The Interconnected, Intersectional Superheroes of Netflix’s *Sense8*

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Abstract

This article explores the hero collective in Netflix’s science fiction series *Sense8* (2015–2018) as a manifestation of deeply-felt desires and anxieties in an era when neoliberalized capitalism and technology seemingly have encroached on every part of the globe. The superhero “cluster” of *Sense8* carries the appeals of cosmopolitanism, globalism, and promised forms of intimacy which partially flatten experiences of difference by uncritically bypassing lines of nation, race, gender, and sexuality. However, as the cluster’s cosmopolitanism undercuts projects of re-negotiating and re-articulating power relations, it simultaneously represents various forms of enacted resistance in which bodies and inter-subjectivities of queer people and people of colour become literal sources of power. This meets the need, not only for greater identarian inclusivity across media, but for an intersectionality that can rebound against neoliberal logics.

Keywords: superheroes, intersectionality, cosmopolitanism, queer kinship, virtual intimacies

Introduction

At several historical moments and within various socio-historical contexts, humans have created superheroes to meet the exigencies of the world around them. Today, in the face of the ever-increasing digital interconnectedness experienced by many individuals and societies around the world, more and more people might be looking for heroes to limn both the newly-available forms of mediated, virtual intimacy and the emergent anxieties surrounding surveillance and privacy concerns across digital platforms. This article explores the collective of heroes in Netflix’s queer science fiction series *Sense8* (2015–2018) as a manifestation of those deeply-felt desires and anxieties in an era when neoliberal forms of capitalism and technology seem to have encroached on every part of the globe.

A riveting and complex work of the superhero science fiction subgenre, *Sense8* is also arguably one of its most queer and ideologically progressive iterations. Co-created by Lana and Lilly Wachowski (known also for the *Matrix* trilogy, *Cloud Atlas*, and *Jupiter Ascending*) and J. Michael Straczynski (known also for *Babylon 5*), *Sense8* follows a group of eight main characters spanning seven different countries and four continents. These heroes discover early in the first season that they are interconnected through their limbic systems, the part of the brain associated with instincts and affect. Having psychic and sensual links, these eight ‘sensoriums’

or ‘sensates’ function as the collective protagonist able to share and channel each other’s emotions, experiences, and bodies. Although far apart in physical relation to each other, their intimate connection helps them grow individually and aid each other’s evasion from the nefarious Biologic Preservation Organization (BPO), which seeks to capture them for experimentation. In terms of its identarian representations, the character ‘cluster’ contains four men and four women, one of whom is a gay man and one a transgender woman in a lesbian relationship. Nationally and sexually diverse, the cluster appeals to audiences that have gravitated to it for its identity politics as well as its compelling characterization and themes.

One of the biggest appeals of *Sense8* that I consider is the queer form of kinship and utopian vision that it speculates through its portrayal of the sensate cluster. In this article, I also engage critically with the figurative potential of this cluster of superheroes as audiences might read it within the current context of the expanding digital age. Interpreting the *Sense8* cluster as a metonym for conditions of the series production, circulation, and consumption on Netflix, I extend its figurative scope to refer to any globally expansive digital platform operating under the logics of neoliberalism. As an act of co-constituted creation, embodied and virtual interactivity, and queer kinship and belonging, the superhero cluster of *Sense8* carries the appeals of cosmopolitanism, globalism, and promised forms of intimacy which also tends toward enveloping and flattening experiences of difference by uncritically bypassing nationalized, racialized, gendered, and sexed lines. However, even as the show’s cosmopolitanism pose problems for projects of re-negotiating and re-articulating systems and relations of power, at the same time the cluster represents the various forms of enacted resistance in which the bodies and inter-subjectivities for queer people and people of colour become sources of power in themselves. This too meets the need for increased diversity of visual representations in media and for the intersectionality that can rebound against the logics of neoliberal capitalism.

In order to trace my claims to their interpretive and evaluative conclusions, I first situate them within the formal or discursive categories of genre. In addition to a close reading of key moments and dynamics of the series, I also review what other scholars and critics have argued about the show in order to highlight its dialectical political and ideological tensions. Finally, I briefly weigh the *Sense8*’s material existence on Netflix’s digital platform against online fandom discourse and activism surrounding the series to suggest ways that audiences have identified with—and even imitated—the show’s superhero characters in tangible ways.

“I am also a we”: *Sense8*’s Queer Utopian Potential, Virtual Intimacies, and Digital Anxieties

The past three decades have seen a spike in popularity and commercial success for the speculative genres of fantasy and science fiction.¹ These genres—particularly fantasy and science fiction—have tremendous potential to influence both individual and social change. In

fictional worlds containing magic or advanced technology, truly egalitarian environments and societies are more seemingly within grasp. This is partly what leads scholar Robert Shelton to classify fantasy and science fiction as “utopian” genres.² Furthermore, since the diegetic worlds of fantasy and science fiction texts can bend the rules and representations of mimetic realities in many senses, they are laden with potential to be free from any number of social, historical, or material norms and conventions. They might more easily surpass other genres, which might cower behind the shield of realism when it comes to their inclusivity and transformative power. In theory at least, the speculative nature of fantasy and science fiction provides a blank canvas upon which one can paint diegetic worlds, characters, and plotlines which might transcend most pre-existing cultural or social realities.

However, this idealist vision does not translate into the actual works being produced. Instead, these genres can be interpreted as playing out—through their semantics and syntaxes and largely in dystopian settings—current anxieties, struggles, and developments of the self and society at large. The superhero subgenre of science fiction, especially in its most simplistic binary form, reifies these tensions through the positioning of its heroes, who embody ideological virtues, against its villains, who represent ideological challenges or threats. However, we have come a long way since *Adventures of Superman* (1952–1958). One need only look to popular film and television today to see it rife with examples of more complex superhero media texts: *Arrow* (2012–), *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013–), *The Flash* (2014–), *Supergirl* (2015–), *Jessica Jones* (2015–), and *The Runaways* (2017–) are a few examples. Considering the Marvel *X-Men* franchise alone, there have been nine films since the turn of the millennium, with one more releasing in 2019, as well as two television series: FX’s *Legion* (2017–) and Fox’s *The Gifted* (2017–). Ramzi Fawaz traces the history of these and other superhero texts from their 1960s comic book origins, which had already begun to cast mutant superhero characters as outsiders to ordinary humanity.³ Coming to embody and represent the marginalized identities and social groups such as women and racial or sexual minorities, Fawaz observes how mutant comic book franchises such as *X-Men* reflected the radical political struggles of the 1960s and beyond.⁴ One can look to Brian Singer’s *X-Men* films as contemporary examples in which especially recent LGBTQ+ identity politics—as well as both assimilationist and more radical agendas—become symbolically represented through the characters, storylines, and fan discourse.

The Netflix original *Sense8* is another contemporary science fiction show that fans, critics, and scholars have praised for its treatment of LGBTQ+ themes. The most famous moments of represented sexuality in the series are its scenes portraying already queer group sex formation in arguably even queerer ways. For example, a groundbreaking moment from Season 1, Episode 6 (‘Demons’) shows several cluster characters ‘visiting’ each other, or channeling each other’s consciousnesses, with explicitly sexual denotations and intents. In the scene, the character Wolfgang (Max Riemelt) visits a bathhouse in Berlin. While bathing in the nude, he makes psychic, virtual contact with the character Nomi, who happens to be having sex at that

moment in San Francisco with her partner, Amanita (Freema Agyeman). Then Lito (Miguel Angel Silvestre), who is having sex in Mexico City with his partner, Hernando (Alfonso Herrera), joins them. Meanwhile, Will (Brian J. Smith) is breaking a sweat at the gym where he also virtually joins in the shared sexual act, hoping that nobody notices when he climaxes. Considering only the sensates involved in this exchange, viewers witness a transgender lesbian, a gay cis man, and two cis men understood to be heterosexual engaging in sexual constructions extending beyond their self-defined or socially perceived purview.

According to the logic of the show, the characters' virtual, mental intimacies matter just as much, if not more, than bodily ones. The series blurs, if not completely eliminates, the notion of an essentialized or socially inscribed sexual orientations or identities, offering up instead a shifting, mutable queer sexuality which transcends both. Slippages in and between various characters' consciousnesses take place across time, space, bodies, and identities, arguably queering everything in between. Within the psychically-linked sensate cluster, there are polysemic portrayals of coupling, copulating, and group sex abound. Through their shared consciousness, the cluster's members are capable of both disembodiment and of being fully, sensually present, arguably allowing for immersive, undefinable, and utopian possibilities for sexuality.

In fact, one might understand the intra-cluster sexuality or intimacy as a sexual, psychophilic partialism which privileges or employs the mind as a site from which to derive sexual pleasure. In other words, the sensates are literally capable of have sex with their minds. This arguably allows for immersive, undefinable, and utopian possibilities for forms of sexuality outside of normal space and time. Instead, queerness in *Sense8* reimagines both. One of the queerest ideas that *Sense8* presents is the disembodiment of the body. Even though it is a media text created within and bound by most conventions of continuity editing, *Sense8* suggests a queerness which defies visual representation. In fact, its major shortcoming in its ability to portray the queer potential of psychophilia derives from having to use the signifiers of bodies at all. The nature of cinema forces the show to rely on images of actors in physical contact with each other to give imagery what, to a cluster-outsider in the diegetic world, would take place solely within headspace. Although poststructuralism or even neuroscience might tell us that all reality is mediated or even produced by mechanisms and structures of discourse or the human brain, *Sense8* goes beyond to offer a queerness or queer sexuality that defies definition in its very pre-lingual—perhaps even pre-conscious—state. In other words, it transcends systems and structures of discursive formation, primarily that of human language, which construct human subjectivities. In semiotic terms, the sensate cluster exists as a sign of queerness without even the need for a signifier to contain it or nail it down concretely.

Nevertheless, the radical sexuality presented within the sensate cluster is subject to critique. Queer sci-fi scholar Alexis Lothian challenges the seemingly utopian vision of a “sexual connectivity [which] insists that *Sense8*'s fantasy of mind-to-mind connection never means

leaving the body behind.”⁵ She argues that its “sterile fantasy [is merely] a cover for the messy, queer possibilities that erupt when bodies meet bodies.”⁶ However, instead of distancing itself from the messiness of bodies, I contend that the cluster invites a further messiness of inherent to forms of intimacy afforded by shared psychic connections. Hence, the psychophilia of the orgy scenes in *Sense8* contains the pleasure that might exist were humans able to bridge the gap created by the separation of consciousnesses and bodies, a form of intimacy and kinship that would—and does—generate a lot of affective messiness. Furthermore, it hints toward where connective technologies are seemingly leading humanity.

I contend that one of the ways *Sense8* invites audiences to interpret the cluster is through the lens of the increasingly interconnected digital world we inhabit. Even as the show outlines queer intimacies hinting toward true utopian, asemiotic potential, a potential that no existing technologies could afford, it uses this psychophilic connection as a way to deepen their individual and collective lived experiences in ways resembling how we use social media and other digital platforms to communicate across space and time. The series’ opening credits sequence furthers this notion as it displays in increasingly rapid succession, accompanied by a mounting non-diegetic score, a montage of moving images shot around the globe, featuring cultural practices, public displays of human contact and affection, iconography of LGBTQ+ pride, and well-known national and international landmarks. From the tone set at the outset and the diversity the show presents in the cluster, it works toward a global and sexual imaginary which contemporary digital platforms and their afforded modes of virtual intimacy seem to promise.

Of course, in addition to seeing the sensate cluster functioning as a metaphor for the ways we currently use digital technology and the Internet to connect with each other in sexual and non-sexual intimate ways, anxieties also emerge from the implications of mind-hacking and body-hacking within and between the cluster members of *Sense8*. Not only can Nomi’s character seemingly hack into any computer system mainframe with relative ease, but the sensates can fluidly hack each other’s minds and bodies at will. For example, in the ninth episode of Season Two (‘What Family Actually Means’), Sun (Bae Doona) is out of prison and is attempting to take justice for her father’s murder into her own hands by getting close enough to her brother to kill him. To do this, she needs Lito’s help to pass a cocktail mixology and serving exam. Furthermore, she needs to perform with dramatic flair to impress the interviewers so that they will hire her to work at an event where her brother will be present. Lito, however, happens to be in a casting audition for a role in a film which would help revive his acting career. The exigence of Sun’s situation almost jeopardizes his own performance and goals. Also, there is a moment in the fourth episode of the same season (‘Polyphony’) when Nomi expresses to Amanita that there are some personal experiences which her cluster still cannot know about her. However, Wolfgang visits her psyche precisely at that moment to seek her help, foreshadowing that it might be a matter of time before the cluster members’ separate lives collapse completely into

each other's.

Sense8, while perhaps lamenting the loss of privacy, also celebrates the characters' separate and unique identities. Except for Will, Riley (Tuppence Middleton), and Wolfgang, the norms of dominant Western culture would marginalize the other five sensates in some way. In fact, in a roundtable of scholars about the series, Lokeilani Kaimana interprets all the major characters as "avatars for minoritized folk."⁷ As they advance into new, shared explorations of sexuality and interconnectedness they begin to transcend—or even negate—the limitations of separateness in a way that allows for shifting possibilities for new subjectivities. Furthermore, this pluralism is what enables the characters to escape the "trauma of enforced confines."⁸ Each separate subject, in other words, has become part of a stronger collective. Nomi echoes this in the second episode of Season One when she famously says while vlogging before San Francisco Pride, "I am also a we."⁹ As in the real world, this transformative potential of interconnectedness might signal a dearth of privacy and the rights to one's own thoughts, but it also opens up new potentiality for what happens when intimacy effaces the barriers of language and bodily affections into pure pre-conscious affect.

In addition to its attempts to portray undefinable queerness and queer forms of sexuality, the showrunners also queer *Sense8* by framing its storylines outside and in resistance to linear, heteronormative narrative forms. In terms of the narrativising of the protagonists' lives, *Sense8* crafts its plot to operate outside or on the fringes of heteronormative spheres of contemporary capitalist society and conventional family life. Instead of merely gesturing toward the characters' bedroom activities, the series instead positions the clusters' shared sexuality—literally, their capacity and impetus for intimate connection—as the plot's fulcrum and impetus, as opposed to the concerns of capitalism and its attendant needs for continuity and social order. This might also distinguish it from other superhero franchises such as *Batman* and *Iron Man*, which feature highly affluent protagonists, or even the elitism suggested by Charles Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in *X-Men*. However, this also entails an overly escapist omission of the material realities of labour, wealth, and social class play in shaping people's lives. Instead, *Sense8* seemingly erases class differences and class concerns, and that is possibly not all it threatens to omit.

In the next section, I examine other potential sources of erasure by considering how the collective desires which *Sense8* anticipates and imagines through its cluster of heroes also teeters on the edge of a cosmopolitan myth of shared progressive ethos.

The Flattening Effects of *Sense8*'s Cosmopolitanism and the Global Imaginary

The queer utopian vision of *Sense8* seems to pair problematically with the flattening effects of cosmopolitanism and a global imaginary. First, it does not engage substantively with the localized contexts, lifeworlds, or struggles of any of its individual characters. Instead, it unites

them under a shared agenda and bypasses meaningful, important lines of difference in seemingly effortless ways. Thus, it is in danger of reducing its characters to stereotypes and mouthpieces of a liberalist, universalist, and cosmopolitan fantasy. Katherine Sender notes “how readily cosmopolitan claims to sexual liberalism bolster neoliberal values of individualism and consumer acquisition. These values eschew community claims, efface real differences of power in the figure of the universal subject, and disavow the histories and continuing effects of colonialism.”¹⁰ In other words, cosmopolitanism offers a progressive ideological model of peaceful and participatory global citizenship, but to achieve this would most likely require and result in complete infiltration of and assimilation to dominant (i.e., Western neoliberal late capitalist) ideology. Similarly, the seemingly liberal project of cosmopolitanism surfaces in what Manfred G. Stegner calls the “global imaginary” to refer to “people's growing consciousness of thickening globality.”¹¹ Furthermore, this global imaginary “is also powerfully reflected in the current transformation of the conventional ideologies and social values that go into the articulation of concrete political agendas and programmes.”¹² A progressive vision, such as the one *Sense8* presents, flirts dangerously close and perhaps overlaps with a neoliberal myth of cosmopolitanism and its lure of the emancipatory potential that we might achieve through a shared ethos of individual freedom and acceptance.

Sense8 portrays a comprehensive progressive, queer sexual imaginary and unites the characters under a shared ethos. Thus, the show flirts closely with cosmopolitanism and its attendant ideologies of universal freedoms and rights that the West might unleash on the rest of the world, primarily through the free market and neoliberal practices of consumption and branding of sexual identities. Delicia Aguado-Pelàez, while praising how the series challenges heteronormative, patriarchal hegemonic structures and representations, simultaneously laments its presentation of non-normative homosexual identities.¹³ By this, she is not referring to Lisa Duggan's conception of homonormativity; after all, none of the characters seem to be following a conventional heteronormative trajectory for marriage and human reproduction. However, what Aguado-Pelàez criticizes is the choice to have all of the characters situated in urban even more cosmopolitanist spaces, instead of rural, and inhabiting visually appealing and gender-conforming bodies, instead of bodies that might be less conventionally coded as attractive or genderqueer bodies. Similarly, Alexis Lothian critiques the group sex scenes for the way that they “highlight the racial limitations of dominant queer representation as well as...the white liberal fantasy that we are all under the same skin.”¹⁴ However, Lothian wrote this before the release of the Christmas Special and Season Two, which feature more group sex scenes with all members of the sensate cluster are involved, as well as their partners. One might argue that this unravels her previous claims.

This ignores the history of Western colonialism that deeply affected the cultures of at least three of its characters somewhat like the series does. The flashy appeal of the cosmopolitan myth rears its head in other aspects of the series as well. Just as the characters' shared

psychophilia erases their borders between identity and sexuality, their pre-lingual, asemiotic queerness seemingly eradicates the borders between their nations, as well as the other markers of cultural and nationality identity. For example, even though the characters speak six or seven different languages in reality, the virtuality of their connection flattens it all to English. The show explains this away by informing the reader they are all encoding in their primary language but being understood in the language of whoever is decoding them. The choice to make this language English, practically speaking, perhaps comes from the producers wanting to avoid the inconvenience of subtitles or gauche nature of dubbing that might be off-putting to audiences. Regardless, the effect furthers the global imaginary of Western, English-speaking audiences, flattening the cultural distinctions and differences that would otherwise separate international strangers in the real world. Presenting a slightly varied or more nuanced view on cosmopolitanism, Lisa Rofel observes that it “does not have a stable meaning, nor is it merely the opposite of ‘the local.’” Rather, she offers that “locating activity, rather than ‘local’ activity, might help us to position the ‘cosmopolitan’ in determinate cultural practices rather than treating it as a deterritorialized phenomenon or wholly a penetration from the West.”¹⁵ Instead of a flattening of national and individual subjectivity under the presupposed steamroller of globalized neoliberalism, she considers the uneven and mixed practices of consumption that shape the politics of desire and identity.

Rather than vindicate any version of the series’ cosmopolitanism, I simply want to acknowledge its immense appeal to audiences the growing hegemony of neoliberal global capitalism. As the promises of a digital utopia have failed and lived experiences within online spaces become even more insular, fragmented, and divided, audiences long for a set of diverse yet like-minded strangers in which to belong. Furthermore, the appeal of *Sense8* for audiences comes from more than its portrayals of psychophilic group sex. In fact, the sex serves as a catalyst for transformative interconnectivity which causes the sensates to evolve as individuals and as a cluster. As these sensates initially discover their connections and shape a group ethos, they also help each other work through personal struggles, which are admittedly sometimes very reductive or stereotyped, especially for the non-Western characters. Furthermore, as a group they have to mobilize to escape the threat posed by the ominous antagonist Whispers and the Biologic Preservation Organization. To accomplish this, the sensates use their bodies as more than organic entities inhabiting space but as hyper-linking technologies capable accessing ‘bodies’ of knowledge which include particular subsets of skills: computer hacking, science, adept vehicle operation, performance and affective states, martial arts, and work outside the law. The cluster becomes a community of virtual intimacy, learning, and support which imbricates broader social fields. It is also one separate from traditional capitalist exchanges. Aside from the sexiness of the show, I contend this is also an equal, if not greater, part of its appeal.

Conclusion

In this article I have offered ways of reading *Sense8* within complex dialectics of representation, affect, and ideology present in the contemporary moment of advancing digital connective technologies and neoliberal capitalism. *Sense8* and its superheroes are undeniably and unabashedly queer, but they are also perhaps a bit too cosmopolitan and Western-centric. The series' narrative foci enact resistance to capitalism by seemingly existing outside its material and ideological structures, but they also neglect the growing class divisions within such systems. Yet despite objections to certain aspects of the show, the series has found a firm niche among primarily queer audiences largely due to its highly visible and progressive representations of gay, lesbian, trans, and otherwise-queer bodies, sexualities, and subjectivities. This might be one of the its most redeeming, or perhaps the most redeeming, aspects. Like media texts in the *X-Men* franchise, *Sense8* resonates with queer folk and people of colour. Furthermore, the series' politics, arguably unlike those of recent iteration of *X-Men*, are not limited to those of recognition or conformity. In fact, even as the representation of queerness in *Sense8* is normalized, it never seeks to be assimilationist or heteronormative. Instead, it presents the queerness of its cluster in opposition to hetero-patriarchal and corporate agendas.

Finally, I want to briefly consider *Sense8*'s material existence on Netflix as a digital platform, weighing this against the series' online fandom discourse and activism. I hope that highlighting audience identification and interactivity with the series, I can point toward the potential of what might occur if mainstream society—especially in an age of great interconnectivity via virtual spaces, networks, and technologies—adopted these transformative models of kinship, such as those queer communities and collectivities already recognize and live.

The popularity of Netflix does not need to be restated, nor does the fact that its platform is now available in 190 countries around the world. Within a matter of years, Netflix has emerged as a poster-child for neoliberalism, both through its global expansion and its individualized algorithmic curation and recommendation of content for and to subscribers. When they released *Sense8* in 2015, it successfully targeted fans of both science fiction and queer genres. Predominantly identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ community, fans of *Sense8* congealed into a still active audience fandom which latched onto its inclusive identity representations and storylines as well as its portrayals of hyper-connected intimacy or kinship. Across platforms such as Tumblr, Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook, several hashtags became attached to fan discourse. These included #iamawe, #wearetheglobalcluster, and #bravelikesense8. There were even webpages where users could generate their own clusters with others around the world. Therefore, it is unsurprising that when Netflix announced the cancellation during Pride Month in 2017, it sent shockwaves through the Twittersphere and immediately mobilized fans to push for the show's renewal. New hashtags such as #bringbacksense8, #renewsense8, and #sensatesforever emerged and spread quickly through Internet spaces. Fans also created petitions, such as one on Change.org which acquired over half a million signatures, to urge Netflix to renew the series.

Within the month, the fans had ultimately succeeded in gaining approval for a two-hour finale, which premiered on Netflix's portal during the summer of 2018. Without overstating the implications of their digital activism, the fans of *Sense8* essentially outmaneuvered, albeit in fairly temporary and limited ways, the logics of neoliberal capitalism. By successfully demanding what a company like Netflix—with its nearly endless options for streaming—was not supplying, fans with queer affiliations, queer alliances, and intersectional identities revealed power through collective movement.

In fact, one contention of this article has been that the most radical notion *Sense8* presents through the collective consciousness of the sensate cluster lies in the very nature of its sharedness or intersectionality. Instead of identifying with one or two characters in the series, *Sense8* invites the process of identification with a group counter-intimacy and kinship in unison—man, woman, gay, straight, cis, trans—and to disrupt queerly the very labels that delineate their differences. Their differences in knowledge, bodies, individualities, and experiences are what give the cluster its powerful potential, but concurrently these differences efface into a public. In other words, they are asking the viewer as an 'I' to identify, like Nomi, as a 'we.' Alexis Lothian has also commented on the effects of this collision or collapse of identity:

The intensity of sensate communication means that each member of the cluster has no choice but to recognise every other member as an equal with whom they can empathise fully. Rather than a world with “no race...no genders...no age,” the utopia of sensate connection seems to offer an alternative vision for globalisation, one in which the dehumanisation and exploitation by the rich world of the poor could be replaced by an empathetic diversity in which the full subjectivity of every person would be incontrovertibly recognised.¹⁶

Furthermore, this 'alternative vision for globalisation' seems look beyond the shortsightedness of cosmopolitanism that popular audiences perhaps have not yet recognized and advocated against. What would this 'empathetic diversity' look like in praxis, and is it even possible? *Sense8* has not—or has not yet been given the full chance—to take its vision beyond that which “often relies on western colonial conception for its global imagination and marginalizes characters of color [and] theorizes contemporary media spectatorship in its appeal to affect and eroticism.”¹⁷ However, the show presents characters from many places on Earth who transcend xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia, all lamentably still traits of many contemporary, dominant societies and political climates. However, in its model, the show at least demonstrates the possibility of what might happen if subjectivities traded phobias for a form of psychophilia that might help individuals living in Western-dominated cultures to feel less alone and isolated. *Sense8* and its heroes demonstrate the superpowers that emerge when shared bodies, identities, and virtual selves connect and activate in haptic, transcendent, and often quite literally intersectional ways.

Notes

¹ Gareth McLean, "The New Sci-Fi," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2007,

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2007/jun/27/broadcasting.comment>.

² Robert Shelton, "The Utopian Film Genre: Putting Shadows on the Silver Screen," *Utopian Studies* 4, no. 2 (1993): 1.

³ Ramzi Fawaz, *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics* (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Alexis Lothian, "Utopia Anniversary Symposium: *Sense8* and Utopian Connectivity," *Science Fiction Film and Television* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 95.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Lokeilani Kaimana, "Sense8 Roundtable," *Spectator* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 78-79.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Sense8*, "I Am Also a We," Season 1, Episode 2 (June 5, 2015), directed by The Wachowskis.

¹⁰ Katherine Sender, "Sexual Mobilities: Selling Cosmopolitanism With Same-Sex Materials in Korean, UK, and US Sex Museums," unpublished journal article (2017): 50-51.

¹¹ Manfred B. Stegner, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 12.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Delicia Aguado-Pelàez, "Los cuerpos como cartografía de resistencias: Anàlisis interseccional de *Sense8*," *Arte y políticas de identidad* 15 (Fall 2016): 39-58.

¹⁴ Lothian, "Utopia," 95.

¹⁵ Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 133-34.

¹⁶ Lothian, "Utopia," 93.

¹⁷ Kaimana, "Sense8 Roundtable," 74.