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Colour, Organization and Critical Affect

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Abstract

In this article we seek to open up the study of affect and organization to colour. Often simply taken for granted in organizational life and usually neglected in organizational thought, colour is an affective force by default. Deploying and interweaving the languages of affect theory, critical theory, and organization studies, we discuss colour as a primary phenomenon for the study of 'critical affect'. We then trace colour's affect in conditioning the unfolding of organization in two particular 'colour/spaces' – Adorno's grey and Taussig's blue of our title – and discuss both its ambiguity and critical potential. Finally, we ponder what colour might do to the style of an organizational scholarship attuned to affect, where sentences blur with things and forces more than they seek to represent them.

Introduction

The study of organization, and of organizational affect, lacks colour. It is, possibly, 'chromophobic'. If so, it seems in good company. Chromophobia, writes the artist David Batchelor (2000), is a prominent affect in 'Western' contexts of culture and thought. Maybe organizational scholarship is afraid of colour, of its sensuousness, vulgarity and queerness? Perhaps it seems safer to keep colour in the realm of art and poetics, where it "gathers together all that is otherwise inarticulate and powerful in the bouquet of the imagery and gamut of feelings" (Taussig, 2009: 155)? But then, quite possibly colour is simply taken for granted and overlooked, or merely perceived as a secondary sphere of decoration, ornament and taste (Baudrillard, 2005). Or conceivably it is the material condition through which scholarship advances that induces a disregard of chromatics? After all, the history of thought is enabled by, and contained in, black marks on white paper. This text, too, comes in black-and-white.

And yet, colour's neglect is rather curious. We dwell in a world that is saturated with colour. The organizational landscape "abounds with colour film, television, fluorescents, op art, billboards, Internet banner ads, screaming neon signs, dazzling fashion displays, postmodern architecture, luminous screen savers, and brightly colored multiscreen installations (…)" (Kane, 2014: 23). Such cacophony of colours must have effects: the hues, tones and tints cannot but do something to organized settings and the bodies that linger in and pass through them (Beyes, 2016). Even chromophobic responses could not exist without colour's affective charge. We therefore propose that colours act as organizational forces and affect organization itself, that they "embody and transform social relations" (Eaton, 2012: 62). In rare exceptions to the organization-theoretical silence about chromatics, Islam et al. (2016: 7) have explored how 'trust experiences' in perfume design are invoked through using the colours orange and red: "The experience of trust, long ago abstracted from a collateral effect of bodily proximity, is hence rediscovered through colour, an innovation that is simultaneously a consolidation of shared experience". And Connellan (2013: 1530) has written about "colour/space as a means of expression, but

also as a means of materialization and embodiment, that is, how colour/space acts upon people or holds the potential to act on people". However, the effects of whiteness[1] in the organizational spaces that Connellan explores are ambiguous, as white is "both uplifting and suppressing at the same moment" (p. 1546-1547). Perhaps they are ambiguous because colours are moving, transient and relational forces that animate matter and befall human bodies – in short, because colour is affect (Deleuze, 2005)?

In tying colour closely to affect, and affect closely to colour, this paper seeks to help redress the neglect of chromatics in organizational analysis, and to show that the study of organizational affect needs to attend to colour. Moreover, taking our cue from Connellan's (2012, 2013) conceptualisation of the ambiguity of white, we endeavour to inquire into the criticality of colour-as-affect: how the immanent operation of colour-as-affect injects contingency into all organizational projects. Finally, pursuing these trajectories cannot be disentangled from the question of how to approach and write (on) colour. We thus also hope to contribute to the debate on how to come to terms with a sphere of "experience that escapes discursive capture", as the call for papers of this special issue states (Fotaki et al., 2014: 434).

To explore how the affect of colour shapes (our understanding and writing of) organizational affectivity, we have structured our paper in three sections. The first section is dedicated to existing inquiries into the nexus of colour and affect. We situate our endeavour in the field of affect theory as well as the extant (if colourless) studies of organizational affect. We then take a closer look at how colour has been approached by affect theorists, and we contextualize the language of affect theory within a wider history of thinking the effects of colour, where we meet the early Walter Benjamin and his sensitivity for the ambiguity and criticality of what colour does or can do. This allows us to ponder the implications of colour-as-critical-affect for the study of organization. In the second section of this paper we move into 'colour/space'. First, we enter 'Adorno's Grey', a contemporary art installation by

the artist and writer Hito Steyerl. Second, we survey 'colour writings' by the anthropologist Michael Taussig (in particular *What Color is the Sacred?*). For us, both works explore and enact the potential and ambiguity of colour as 'critical organizational affect'. The third and final section is given over to what colour might do to the style of an organizational scholarship attuned to affect. In our conclusion, we summarize the main pathways and findings of our journey.

Before we move on, there are some caveats and qualifications that are worth noting in advance. Ours is only one way of approaching colour that in no way seeks to fix or 'still' the effects of hues, shades and tones through affect theory, in the way of various studies on colour techniques or colour meanings that have been developed into manuals for designers. These tend to endorse certain symbolic codes of colour without much critique (Connellan, 2012), with colour conceived of as "a retrieval tool by designers and marketers to create a sense of personality for brands, products and in marketing messages and promotions of trends" (DeLong and Goncu-Berk, 2012: 89). In dealing with colour, there is always a tendency to succumb to essentialist understandings of specific colours as standing for certain invariable, cross-cultural and a-historical affects; such as the menace of yellow, the hotness of red or the coolness of blue. Yet, in such analytical treatment the awareness of colour's affective force invariably fades into the background. Whilst sensitive to the fact that the desire to modulate affect through colour and colour codes needs to be taken into account, our endeavour tries to steer clear from "the circular arguments of opinion polls and market research" (Gage, 2006: 11) that set out to demonstrate what needed to be demonstrated, i.e. that certain colours are closely related to certain feelings, which then feeds into mass marketing as well as workspace and factory design. Our work is much more aligned with that of researchers such as Kisacky (2012), for example, who explored the move from all-white operating theatres in the early 20th century to the "ubiquitous blue-green scrubs of late twentieth century hospitals" (p.121), and in the process revealed a shifting cultural configuration of colour and sickness: "If hospitals had made green the colour of surgery, they had also

strengthened white as the colour of cleanliness, but of a cleanliness so extreme as to be discomforting,

sickening" (p. 121-122). When DeLong and Goncu-Berg (2012) explored the association between green

and sustainability with their students, they found that many felt that 'green' had lost its affective force

through overuse as it had "been exploited by companies to market their products and increase their

margins" and that it therefore "has no definition and really carries no value" (p. 97). Colour always

evades any fixed method of sensemaking!

To conceptualise such shifts and evasions and develop a notion of 'critical affect', we deploy the

languages of affect thinking (e.g. Deleuze/Massumi) and critical thinking (e.g. Benjamin/Taussig), with

our focus on how colour embodies and unfolds relations of organizing providing the means of weaving

these languages together. This constitutes an important contribution of our paper, moving beyond

symbolic approaches which closely relate colours to certain feelings or suggest a fixed correspondence

between a colour and an affect. In bringing together affect thinking and critical thinking we emphasize

colour as an agential force that is open to modulation, yet evades the material and discursive

apparatuses of sense-making; colour-as-affect is not semiotically ordered. 'Thinking colour', then, is

really about experimenting with how we perceive, as Walter Benjamin (2011a) pointed out over a

century ago. To learn to think and critically to apprehend what colour does – rather than focus on what

it is supposed to be – thus enables us to put into question well-established ways of seeing

'organization'.

Colour and/as affect

> For no one really knows what color is, where it is, even whether it
> is. (…) The Encyclopedia does not help. "If normally our
> perception of color involves 'false consciousness', what is the
> right way to think of colors?" it asks. "In the case of color, unlike

other cases", it concludes, "false consciousness should be a cause for celebration".

Maggie Nelson, *Bluets* (2009: 15)

Our endeavour, as well as the special issue in general, can be inscribed into a more general reconsideration of the aesthetic and the affective in contemporary cultural and social thought (Angerer, 2015; Jameson, 2015; Reckwitz, 2012). Of course we cannot do justice to the 'general turn to affect' (e.g. Flatley, 2008; Hemmings, 2005; La Caze and Lloyd, 2011; Leys, 2011; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Wetherell, 2015) within the confines of this article. Yet, we can indicate and explore how relating colour to affect calls forth some important issues within this literature and with regard to the notion of 'critical affect'. In this section, we first distinguish between the main conceptual strands of affect theory and how they have gained traction in the study of organization. Enlisting writings by Deleuze, Manning and Massumi, we then discuss how colour already is at work in affect theorizing. We subsequently broaden our search for colour-as-affect by taking into consideration the genealogy of thinking colour as affect, and we offer some early writings of Walter Benjamin as a particularly fruitful approach to the criticality and potential politics of chromatics. Finally we tentatively pull together these elaborations into guiding assumptions on the critical study of colour as organizational force.

The colourless world of organizational scholarship (even on affect)

Broadly put, affect can be used "as a general term that defines relations among all kinds of bodies" (Seyfert, 2012: 31), i.e. both human and non-human bodies. It is invoked as a "relational organizing power" (Angerer, 2015: 115) that takes place below and before human cognition and that thus escapes the 'speaking subject'. Affect studies therefore engage with what Clough (2010: 224) calls the "infra-empirical" or "an empiricism of sensation"; it attends to how bodies are organized in and through the

transmission of forces or 'intensities' that move across them. Reflections on the state of affect theory tend to agree that it entails two broad vectors (Angerer, 2015; Hemmings, 2005; Leys, 2011; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). The psychobiological vector, usually traced to Tomkin's psychology of affect and its reconsideration by Sedgwick, assumes affects to be sources of in-built, yet non-cognitive responses. They are impersonal in the sense of not being at the disposal of, or of being irreducible to, conventional notions of subjectivity, belief and desire. This has, for instance, led to the diagnosis of "basic affects" and the study of "affect programs" that trigger innate emotions and shape bodily drives (Wetherell, 2015). The second vector puts a stronger emphasis on affect's incessant movement between states and bodies. Affects are here theorized as formless and unqualified, impersonal and non-signifying forces, becomings or intensities that are located in in-between relations and resonances. Informed by "Massumi's reading of Deleuze's reading of Spinoza", as Pile (2010: 5) somewhat sardonically puts it, these force-relations and shifting intensities are seen to "prefigure encounters, […] set up encounters, and […] have to be worked on in these encounters" (Thrift, 2000: 219). They take hold of human bodies and condition what they can do.

While the psychobiological vector and its potential to rethink psychological and psychoanalytical theorems has been picked up in the study of organization (Kenny, 2012; Kenny and Fotaki, 2014), the 'Deleuzian vector' seems more readily to lend itself to exploring relational processes of organizing. As we discuss below, it also engages with the conundrum of colour as an in-between phenomenon that animates matter and works on human bodies. It is thus this kind of approach to, and sensibility for, organizational affect – where affect is immanently located in the midst of organizational life, conditioning organizational relations – that we seek to put into conversation with the affective force of colour. We can base this conversation on recent work that seems to instigate what can perhaps be called organization theory's minor affective turn. For one, there is an interest in thinking economic production and labour through the lens of affectivity (e.g. Dowling, Nunes and Trott, 2007; Gregg, 2011;

Hardt, 1999). Paving the way for our attempt at attending to colour as affective force, a number of studies have been dedicated to the affective constitution and destabilization of organized settings, paying particular attention "to phenomena that ordinarily and routinely get suppressed or marginalized in studies of organization" (O'Doherty, 2008: 542). These studies have touched upon the atmospheric constitution of organization (Borch, 2010), where affective blurring continuously takes place (O'Doherty, 2008); where affect works through the organization and 'queering' of time (Steyaert, 2015); where 'dark' affects mess up the everyday organization of public space (Beyes, 2010); and where the uncanny disturbs and reconfigures organizational settings (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013) just as much as the absent presence of love invites reconsiderations of gendered organizational experience (Vachhani, 2015). Methodologically, such work has been connected to affective cartographies of organizational change (Lohmann and Steyaert, 2006), psycho-geographies of city-organization (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; O'Doherty, 2013) and organizational geographies in slow motion (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012). Notably and important for our endeavour, this body of work pays close attention to, and experiments with, the forms and styles of writing. These are often attempts at presenting affect in such a way that the presentation itself performs its connection to affect's processuality, relationality and resonance (Clough, 2010). They can thus be read as experiments with a new or different "poetics of organization" (Vachhani, 2015: 149) and, correspondingly, as disengagements from "the masculine form of linearity and abstraction, and of coming quickly to the point — what can be called the genre of molar text and royal science" (Steyaert, 2015: 164).[2]

While this kind of work aims to "give (...) *colour* to the various affects, intensities and rhythms" (Steyaert, 2015: 164; our emphasis) of organization, the ubiquitous world of colour itself is strangely absent from studies of organizational affect. But then, perhaps this neglect is less strange than it might appear. Broadly put, the world of colour has frustrated scholarly attempts at order, overview and representation (Batchelor, 2008). This is indicative of an inability of systematic inquiry and scholarly

terminology to come to terms with hues and tones and their affective capture, of "a more fundamental disarray (…) that baffles the usual procedures of language" (Lichtenstein, 1993: 4). According to Lichtenstein, moving from deciphering colour as if it would be a text towards acknowledging and seeking to apprehend the force of colour means risking "philosophical suicide".

And yet, it is not that thought would not be open to such suicidal tendencies when spellbound by colour (Riley, 1995). Indeed, colour's affective agency is beginning to affect the study of the social. For instance, Taussig's (2009) remarkable *What Color is the Sacred?* offers an anthropological *tour de-force* through colour as 'polymorphous magical substance'; exploring how it shapes what we feel, perceive and express (De Cock, 2012). Eaton (2013) shows how visual culture and colonial representation, as well as its counter-movements, feed off the affective power of hues and tones. Thrift (2008) connects the material practices of glamour to colour's affective spell. Lavin (2004) discusses how architectural colour is a matter of mood, atmosphere and affect. And in legal studies, colour-as-affect and its "nondiscursive, asignifying qualities" are mobilized to unsettle and deterritorialize the chromophobic black and white of the law (Slaughter, 2007: 144).

Colour as affect: Deleuze, Manning, Massumi
Many of these recent attempts to grapple with what colour does relate to what we referred to above as the second vector of affect theory. Indeed, colour-as-affect figures quite prominently in this line of thought. In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze connects what he calls the "hysteria of painting" to colour's direct influence on the nervous system (2005: 37). Sensation is presented as a delivery-mechanism of affect – in Bacon, "there are nothing but affects" (p. 28-29) – and in painting, "colourism" denotes this decisive relational 'force', "on which everything else depends" (p. 97). Colourism thus means experimenting with colour's affective potential. Neither employed as a symbolic sign for certain qualities nor as a way of identifying and referring to particular objects, colour here

remains independent from or escapes figuration and representation. Its "spatializing energy" (p. 93)

creates affective space. Deleuze called it "haptic space" or, paradoxically, "a haptic sense of sight" (p.

107), denoting a body's affectation by and through colour that works on all the senses. Such affectation

is reflected in the vocabulary of painterly colourism: "not only hot and cold, but 'touch' *[touche]*,

'vividness' *[vif]*, 'seizing hold of life' *[saisir sur le vif]*, 'achieving clarity' *[tirer au clair]*" (p. 97).

Relatedly, in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* Deleuze (1986) reflects on "the colour-space of

colourism" (p. 117) as a singular force of affect. It takes the form of uniform tints of surface-colour, of

"atmospheric colour which pervades all the others" and of "movement-colour" and its shifting tones,

but most of all works through its capacity to absorb, engulf and seize anything whatsoever.

Emphatically quoting the film-maker Godard's credo '*it's not blood, it's red'* Deleuze presents it as "*the*

formula of colourism" (p. 118; emphasis in original). Again, a symbolist notion of colour – the

correspondence between specific colours and particular affects (the menace of yellow, the hotness of

red etc.) – is rejected. "*Colour is on the contrary the affect itself*, that is, the virtual conjunction of all the

objects which it picks up" (p. 118; emphasis added). Things might be perceived and feelings might be

expressed through colours, but this is predicated on colour's affective potential above and beyond

reference. Exemplified by certain films, then, for Deleuze colour-as-affect harbours the potential to

produce what he calls "any-space-whatever" (p. 120), spaces that lose their homogeneity, become

uncertain and contingent, and are thus charged with the potential of becoming-other.

Massumi extended Deleuze's colourism to further inquiries into the sphere of colour and/as

affect. In *Too-blue: Color-patch for an expanded empiricism* (2002b) he dwells on how colour in general,

and blue in particular, is able to strike human bodies, an atmospheric force between objects and

subjects that befalls and shapes "their joint situation" (p. 211). Colour as affect is not only a personal

experience, and neither does it reside in objects, although it can certainly be ascribed to them; it is

"produced in context *and* eternally 'insists' on itself, in pushy independence" (p. 213; emphasis in

original). There invariably is a trans-situational surplus beyond the emotions of the personalized capture of colour experience. This surplus is "the connecting thread of experience" and "the invisible glue that holds the world together", moving in and out of sight, or rather, haptic vision. Such is affect, and such is what colour does. If it appears as subjective emotion or as a property of an object, then affect has struck and is contained or stilled; colour's processual charge and openness disappear from view. And yet, to Massumi, the world is always on the verge of taking on a different hue, fostering new sensations. What are usually regarded as the objective characteristics of colour – hue, saturation, brightness – can certainly be defined and measured in terms of wavelength properties, but they are not able fully to account for the vagaries of colour experience – of its capacity to affect and be affected.

Finally, Erin Manning's (2008) reflections on "coloring the virtual" seek to demonstrate the affect of colour again by way of a visual art piece. What we see or how we see, or rather 'see-feel' – her way of describing haptic vision – when experience is coloured by colour's force, the 'more-than' what is represented, are glimpses of the virtual taking-form, becoming actual. Harking back to Deleuze's 'movement-image', in such cases, "[t]he how of seeing... is never a representation of movement, nor is it a projection of movement. It is a moving-with of perception in the making...This *feltness* of seeing is itself coloured: perception reddens, oranges, blackens. This colouring comes through virtually – we never see it as such" (p. 329).

In the vocabulary of affect theory, then, as an affective force "both moved and moving" colour enacts a secular magic "through the establishment of human-nonhuman fields of captivation" (Thrift, 2008: 9, 10). Colour animates matter and brings forth an "unconscious poetry of substance" (p. 16), which affects or strikes the human body before cognition, emotion and the organization of reason kick in. With regard to the question of affect's criticality, the texts discussed above share an emphasis on the unexpected and unforeseeable, or what one could call a critical focus on the singular, the unusual and a fairly unspecific 'affective freedom' (Hemmings, 2005). The critical potential of colour-as-affect here

lies in its 'lines of flight' freed from constraints and normative social organization. Massumi (2002a) has indeed emphasized that affect is critically pertinent precisely because it is an autonomous force, which escapes bodies and forms of capture. In this sense, however, it must be out of reach of critical interpretation, too. In the words of Hemming's (broadly sympathetic) assessment, "we are left with a riddle-like description of affect as something scientists can detect the loss of (in the anomaly), social scientists and cultural critics cannot interpret, but philosophers can imagine" (2005: 563). While this is perhaps a refreshing stance against a comfortable position of negative critique – Massumi (2002a), for one, tends to present rather sweepingly 'critical thinking' as outdated and even unreflexive – our engagement with colour and/as critical affect calls for a more nuanced and careful approach. For this we find inspiration in the genealogy of attempts to think colour as affect.

Colour's criticality: Goethe, Benjamin

The attention granted to colour in the Deleuze-inspired vector of affect thinking not only reminds us to connect the study of organizational affect to colour; it also points towards a venerable tradition of thinking the chromatics of affect. An in-depth engagement with this conceptual lineage, which cuts across schools of thought often held to be incompatible or inimical, is beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, we briefly focus on older ways and styles of pondering the affective medium of colour in order to coax out a distinct approach to 'critical affect'.

In 1810 the poet and polymath Goethe published his landmark *Theory of Colours*. As an outcome of decades of proto-phenomenological experiments with colour's constitution and effects, the *Theory of Colours* is regarded as the founding document for modern explorations of colour's capacity to affect. Goethe, writes Deleuze (2005: 97), is the first to explore and think 'colour-space'. Aware of the limits of language to present what "might rather be called powers than objects, and which are ever in movement" (Goethe, 1810/1840: 300), Goethe pioneered a sensibility for colour as "matter-force rather

than matter-form" (Taussig, 2008: 7). In this reading of the *Theory of Colours* – for sure, there are others (Brusatin, 1991) – Goethe tentatively and probingly maps out the field of affective chromatics: colour is apprehended as a relational force that is ever in movement and between subject and object. It 'strikes' affected bodies, which become contingent and invariably specific co-producers of colour experience; in this sense, it precedes and shapes feelings and thought. Colour, then, is afforded an agency, a rhythm and life of its own. "Colour walks", is alive, Taussig (2009: 26) writes. It is, says Benjamin (2011a: 211-12), "something winged that flits from one form to the next" and thus the "medium of all changes, and not a symptom".

Indeed, Benjamin's fragments and snippets on colour serve as our main point of reference here, since they give a critical edge to the exploration of colour as affect. Caygill (1998) argues that Benjamin based his notion of speculative experience on colour and chromatic experience, with "chromatic differentiation" taking the place of "linguistic signification" as "paradigm of experience" (p. xiii).[3] Colour experience therefore pushes us to the limits of thought: colour "is quality alone" and in no way substance; "[c]olors see themselves", they are "objects and organs" of seeing at the same time (Benjamin, 2011b: 2018). Such chromatic experience enables a genuine critical mode of perception. It would come to shape Benjamin's epistemological approach to history and culture as well as later concepts such as dialectical image, thought-image and memory-image (Weigel, 2015). In his study on Benjamin's thought subtitled *The Colour of Experience*, Caygill (1998) turns to the question of organization to describe what is at stake here. As a force or medium (and not a symptom) of organization, colour becomes "a technology for organising experience" (p. 80). It is at work in the "awkward fusions and confusions of the political and the technological forms of organisation", which shape perception (p. 78) as well as in "the nuances of riotous colour", often in neglected details, which harbour "the possibility (...) of a *reorganisation of experience through colour*" (p. 152; emphasis added).

Perhaps now more than ever, an affective machinery and its technologies of sentiment are busy manipulating collective moods by pre-cognitively cultivating mass emotions, constituting a new form of performance management (Amin and Thrift, 2013; Hjorth and Pelzer, 2007). The important 'lesson' to draw from Benjamin is that experiencing and thinking colour can be particularly attuned to the interplay of control and liberation, and thus to the potential of critical practice and thought. Qualifying a tendency to celebrate affect's liberating force, then, such thinking reckons with its continuous administration, with 'colour management' (Blaszczyk, 2012) and colour as an agent of power and domination spreading sameness (Connellan, 2013). And yet, its sheer fluidity and contingency announces escape routes out of the organization of experience in which it finds itself, as Benjamin was so aware of (and as Deleuze celebrated with regard to the art of painting and film). Colour thus propels thinking to deal with both the instrumental modulation of affect and its overflow, that which exceeds and possibly subverts technologies of capture and control.

Implications for the study of organizational affect

What are the implications of our somewhat hurried journey through the landscape of colour, affect and critique so far? We have broadly situated our endeavour along a vector of scholarship that approaches affect as a field of impersonal and pre-cognitive forces that take hold of and shape what human bodies can do. Following this line of thought, we have discerned a minor turn to affect in the study of organization. It engages with affects as immanent to, albeit often overlooked elements of, organizational settings and experiences, which create lines of flight that offer an escape from organizational-life-as-normal. However, colour does not show up in these accounts. Taking a closer look at how affect theorists have grappled with colour-force, we have arrived at the notion of colour-as-affect. It animates matter, strikes human bodies and is 'stilled' in sense experience and the ensuing feelings and thoughts.

Yet, at least with regard to colour, affect theory seems to overemphasize its non-determined, non-instrumental and liberating qualities. By way of a short detour into the history of thinking chromatics in terms of what colour does or can do, we have indicated that there is a rich critical tradition of thinking colour/space, i.e. the relational movements of hues and tones that engulf the observer, affording sensations and perceptions. With Benjamin, moreover, we have argued that a speculative mode of colour experience thus opens the possibility of critically sensing and thinking organizational transformation through the interplay of colours. Importantly, this entails an awareness of the ambiguity of colour as both technology of control and 'unmanageable thing' (Taussig, 2009: 17).

The implications for the study of organizational affect seem both clear-cut and somewhat tricky. First and foremost, organizational scholars are asked to become aware of colour as an affective force of organizing by default, which is immanent to organizational life. Second, colour-as-affect does not operate through the structures of language, discourse and meaning. Attending to colour thus calls for a different form of knowing, a different 'attunement' (Stewart, 2011) to the relational interplay of hues and tones, and thus for a more speculative mode of experience. Third, such an attunement should be of interest to a critical study of organizational affect, since it directs attention towards colour's fundamental ambiguity between instrumental organization and unmanageable reorganization of experience. In embodying and transforming organizational relations, colour thus underscores how the affective is central to the politics of organization (cf. Kenny et al., 2013). Connellan (2012: 66) explores in this context how "[w]hite as a colour becomes a code for power but the code is made to seem so ubiquitous that it is no longer visible in and of itself". Fourth, our (over)generous use of quotations perhaps already points to the challenge of 'writing colour'. There is a textual colourism that can propel us to experiment with a more daring and adventurous writing 'from within' colour-space,[4] and from which the study of organizational affect can draw courage and inspiration. With these reflections, we think that it is time to enter colour/space.

Moving in(to) colour/space

A field of organizational affect in its own right, the mundane ubiquity of colour offers countless prosaic encounters with affect's ambiguity. In this section, we attempt to bring the understanding of colour as affective and ambiguous force of organizing to the fore by presenting and discussing two such encounters. Our first colour/space is *Adorno's Grey*, an essay-film and video installation by the Berlin-based artist, writer and teacher Hito Steyerl. To opt for an example from the visual arts is an obvious choice. There exists a rich art history of experimenting with colour and trying to find words for its effects and affects (Gage, 2006). Moreover, Steyerl's essay-film arguably thematizes the relation between colour and critical thinking; it pulls the observer into the critical interplay of colour and the way it influences organization. Our second example relies on the anthropologist Michael Taussig's work on colour. Here we find an exemplary attunement to the double-edged potential of chromatics as force of organization. Taussig (2009) seeks to find a language and thought-images for the presence of colour "as something alive, like an animal" (p. 6); for its "combustible mix of attraction and repulsion" (p. 9) that shapes the organization of the social and organizational practices themselves. Ranging widely in geographical space and historical time, as well as across disciplinary boundaries, Taussig shows how colour is at the heart of commodification and exchange whilst simultaneously demonstrating its transgressive nature in a "Western" world that equally yearns for colour as it is afraid of bright hues and tones. Moreover, these two colour-cases quite viscerally remind us that apprehending colour's relational intensity is entangled with the forms and styles of its artistic and scholarly presentation, something we will turn to in the third and final section of this paper.

Adorno's Grey

Two art conservators in lab coats scrape away paint and plaster from the walls of the philosopher

Theodor W. Adorno's old lecture hall (*Hörsaal VI*) at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. They are

searching for a mythical colour: Adorno's grey. The great critical theorist, so the legend goes, had the

walls of his lecture hall painted completely grey (Lemhöfer, 2008); a prime pedagogical case of

managing affect. According to the apocryphal story the chosen monochrome was supposed to aid the

students' concentration and to minimize distraction. This story of course harks back to much older

tropes that paint the difference between philosophy and life as one between greyness and colour.

"Grey, dear friend, is all theory / And green the golden tree of life", Mephistopheles proclaims in

Goethe's *Faust, Part One* (Goethe, 1808/1987: 61). And Hegel (1820/1968: 13) remarks in the famous

preface to his *Philosophy of Right* that, "philosophy paints its grey on grey" when forms of life "cannot

be rejuvenated, but only known" by means of grey. Thinking is always too late to show life how it ought

to be lived, and "[t]he owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering".

Steyerl's images, shot in black and white but low in saturation and contrast, radiate an eerie,

stunning grey hue. They seem to play with and problematize the age-old trope of the greyness of

theory versus the chromatics of life. What emerges is a grey of uncertainty and seeking, to echo

Deleuze's (1986: 117) ruminations on 'the affection-image' in film, vibrating "with the *more-than* of its

actual representation" (Manning, 2008: 328; emphasis in original). Complementing the moving images'

grey vividness, the voice-over narrates an infamous event while we watch the conservators chipping

away. In the turbulent months at the end of the 1960s, colour and critical affect disrupts Adorno's

lecture 'Introduction to Dialectical Thought' of April 22nd, 1969. There is heckling, unrest and confusion;

the more radical wing of the student protest turns against the 'shitty critical theoreticians' (as Adorno's

doctoral student Hans-Jürgen Krahl put it; quoted after Pinto, 2014: 162) and particularly against the

most preeminent thinker of what would come to be called the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. A

rhyme is scribbled on the blackboard: "*Wer nur den lieben Adorno läßt walten, der wird den Kapitalismus*

sein Leben lang behalten" ("The ones who let dear Adorno rule will preserve capitalism for the rest of their lives"; translation from Pinto, 2014: 162). After stating that he would give his students five minutes to decide on whether the lecture should take place or not, Adorno is surrounded by three female students who shower him with tulips and roses and bare their breasts, dancing around his desk. The shocked professor hastily picks up his material and leaves the room in tears. He would never teach again. The remaining lectures were called off and later that year Adorno died of a heart attack. Some forty years later, in one of the many stories woven around the event, a journalist revisits *Hörsaal VI*. Entering the now purple doors to the lecture hall, walking past a flashy green advertisement for a mobile phone service provider, she stumbles upon a Professor of Management adjusting his power point slides to show the graphs and curves of a budgeting and finance lecture (Lemhöfer, 2008).

In Steyerl's film, meanwhile, the fabled grey does not resurface, and the conservators start scratching the white walls, creating a greyish visual effect as if at work on an abstract painting. The video's visual and auditory narratives rub against each other without being resolved. There is no black and white here; no historical settling of scores, only a fluctuating spectrum of greys. The film's complexity seems to caution against a facile comment on scholarly chromophobia where black on white represents the cold, rational, 'male' and 'Western' analytics, whereas colour is delegated to some dangerous other or foreign body, such as the half-naked female students armed with flowers, or "the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological" (Batchelor, 2000: 23). Rather than positing a glib commentary on radical theory, radical politics or radical art (or a lament on their foregone potential), the essay-film's shades and nuances of grey produce – and draw the viewer into – colour/space, thus propelling her to think. Such is the affective force of colour. It is the chromatic experience, then, the 'more-than-representational' effects of its shifting greys, that enacts a dialectic of control and openness to change. The fabled grey of discipline, concentration and docile students harbours uncertainty and becoming-other; it is equally managed substance and unmanageable force,

itself prone to fluctuations and to the interruptions of "riotous colour" that reorganize classroom experience (Caygill, 1998: 152).

We can only note in passing that experiencing *Adorno's Grey* can also summon reflections on how colour inflects critical theories; how it is intertwined with theory and thought. Adorno not only had the walls of his classroom painted grey; he also developed a Goethean sensibility for what colour does. Even the comparably bleak meditations on abstract art's black, presented as ideal and force of resistance in Adorno's (2004) *Aesthetic Theory*, show clear traces of colour's assumed capacity to allow transformative experiences and thoughts, at least temporarily releasing us from the traps of consumer capitalism. But of course, the latter is predicated on colour's affective charge – and it is for instance in the collection of aphorisms titled *Minima Moralia*, that Adorno (1951) lashes out against the manipulative force of the gaudy and false hues and tones of technicolor and the bright and dazzling surfaces of the culture industry and commodity capitalism. The study of affect's criticality and co-optation is thus asked to deal with the chromatics of social organization.

Taussig's blue

The "unthinkable scandal" of colour (Melville, 1996: 141) inevitably haunts the spaces and times of organizing. Consider indigo (Taussig, 2008, 2009: 141-158)! At the forefront of global commerce, slave trade and empire, ending up in military and police uniforms as much as in the presumed anti-uniform of Levi-Strauss jeans and the workers' boiler suits beloved by Bauhaus artists and thinkers, indigo has quite a story to tell (Pastoureau, 2001; Eaton, 2013). A pigment of brilliant and comparably steadfast purple-bluish hue, the indigo-making process was as labour-intensive and horrific as it was miraculous to (at least Western) observers. Taussig unearths a marvellous source, from which he quotes at length. In *Rural Life in Bengal*, published in 1864, an Englishman named Colesworthy Grant recorded observations of everyday village life which are shot through with indigo.

There is the sheer intensity of production: the crushing of indigo plants, their placing in river water where they have to stay for 10-12 hours, the water level rising with the swelling of the plants, and the tribesmen entering the vat to beat the strange liquid with paddles for two hours, beating the blue lined up in neat rows, which turns into a blue-bodied choreography of crushing physical labour that is simultaneously a choreography of dancing, crying and singing, advancing, retreating, to the right, to the left, changing hands, building one line to beat from end to end, forming a circle and moving towards each other "like the figures in a quadrille (...) until the whole contents of the vat are in a whirl" (Grant, quoted in Taussig, 2009: 150). Becoming indecipherable from the physical intensity of production, there is the scene of colour. The vat metamorphoses, is alive in a composite force of human labour and chromatic excess, orange, green, olive, "so that I am puzzled to tell you what precise colour it really has (...) When the beating commences (...) it generally presents a light green complexion. This through a variety of beautiful changes, gradually darkens into a Prussian green, and from that, as the beating continues, and the colouring matter more perfectly develops itself (...) into the intense deep blue of the ocean in stormy weather" (Grant in Taussig, 2009: 152).

Colour's affective intensities appear here as pivotal to the organization of lives and bodies. First, the processes of labour and production, however sordid, cannot be disconnected from colour's atmospheric whirl. Our observer Grant is pulled into colour/space, where the shifting interplay of hues animates matter and strikes human bodies. Both auspicious and horrific, there is a redemptive obscenity at work in the depiction of exhausting labour in its chromatic, choreographed beauty. Second, colour's combustible mix of attraction and repulsion, chromophilia and chromophobia marks the colonizer's fascination with exotic hues, dyes and pigments. Grant's awed descriptions are testament to how indigo production and the indigo worker become the contradictory site of colonial anxiety and phantasms of the other, where true craft and true colour flourish in the idealised archaic Indian village. Third, if colour thus was "the coke of empire" (Eaton, 2013: 9), then colour-as-affect was

at the core of the global chains of production, labour, trade and mercantile capitalism, shaping and energizing it (Taussig, 2009). And such is colour's ambiguity: the revered indigo "speaks of colonialism and bloodshed"; in this sense, it is "a malevolent colour" (Eaton, 2013: 7).

How could critical organizational scholarship ever forget about colour's affective force? Perhaps, as Tausssig speculates, "[i]n making the magic of color itself a commodity, we effectively blinded ourselves to its magic" (2008: 12). He thus embarks on a passionate quest to "redeem indigo" (2009: 141). In the context of our much more modest attempt to confront the critical study of organizational affect with colour, the anthropologist performs an exemplary feat of social inquiry into colour's organizational force: from the gruesome affective labour of indigo production in the colonies, to the Western fascination with, and repulsion by, the coloured colonial other; from the "rush" of colour, "that takes us out of ourselves" like a drug, to the surplus-value that colour's affectual capacity brought to the commodity form (Taussig, 2009: 146); from colour's allure that saw it attached to military uniforms, ruling class garments as well as working class jeans, to the manifold artistic and poetic attempts to both capture and transform what blue can do.

Colour, organization and critical affect

Reflecting on our two cases, we suggest that Steyerl and Taussig present approaches to critical affect that we would like to see amplified in the critical study of organization. For one, both colour/spaces affectively and reflectively present the realm of chromatics as an affective sphere par excellence. Colour here is seen as forever in movement and taking on contrasts and configurations with other colours. It animates matter and intensifies sense perception. It both renders and evades form: the organization of labouring bodies, classrooms and commodities. More than just metaphorical speech or a regime of signification, let alone a secondary veil merely attached to objects and forms, colour becomes a primary organizational force in its own right, which the thinking and apprehending of affect

needs to take into account. Rather than being an 'other' to thought (the green of 'life' vs. the grey of

'theory'; the horrific beauty of indigo), thinking is imbued with colour-as-affect. "Colour", affect

theorists Manning and Massumi (2014: 80; emphasis omitted) write, "is thinking's affective

accompaniment. Its feeling friend." Furthermore, the "feeling friend" of hues, shades and tones is far

from innocent; it is entangled with and perhaps even shapes relations of domination and control as well

as forces of critique and liberation, as Steyerl's essay-film and Taussig's meditation on blue insinuate.

Second, both examples present us with the immanent operation of affect in conditioning

organizational life. In this sense, Steyerl's fluctuating greys and Taussig's shifting tones of indigo

production and commercialisation reflect and perform a critical 'chromatics of organizing' (Beyes,

2016). We can discern at least three layers that are interwoven in the respective 'performances':

workspace, consumption and alternative organizing. For one, 'Taussig's blue' lays out a vivid scene of

how exploitative labour is shot through with colour-as-affect that shapes the process of production.

Adorno's Grey, on the other hand, is re-enacted (and subverted) as an organizational space of discipline

and focused study. Both cases encapsulate and allow the exploration of colour as social technology and

management tool in the workspace, which cannot be disentangled from its affective force that shapes

experience and conduct. And both colour/spaces of work are presented as ambivalent sites,

suppressing and uplifting at the same time (Connellan, 2013). Then there is the organizational sphere of

consumption. It is through the use of colour that Steyerl's film makes the viewer ponder or reread

Adorno's critique of the dazzling colours of commodities and how affect operates on late capitalist

consumers who are held "interidiotically stable" (Thrift, 2008: 12). Taussig, on the other hand, seeks to

push his readers into the affective allure and seductiveness of colour that lends commodities their

intoxicating force, albeit without reducing colour to a kind of affective surplus value merely employed

to boost consumption. Indeed, both scenes broach the affective charge of colour as defamiliarizing and

disorienting and thus as potentially resistant and politically emancipatory, at work in alternative forms

of organizing, which seem so often tied to the rush of colour, its rallying force. Taussig's description hints at the correlation of colour and independence struggle (Eaton, 2013); Steyerl's greys reflect on the outbreak of colours that accompany and affectively shape protest movements.

Third, if colour-as-affect is immanent to organizational life, then this calls for an 'immanent critique', which injects contingency into and thus helps transform the forms of life and organization in which it finds itself. It should not surprise us that the notion of 'immanent critique' can be traced back to Benjamin and the speculative experience of colour in its fundamental ambiguity between instrumental organization and unmanageable reorganization of experience (Caygill, 1998). As such colour takes us away from generalized statements of affect's universal capture as well as of abstract speculations about virtual intensities forever beyond our grasp, and from a simple cause-and-effect model that is still prevalent in much of the literature on organizational aesthetics, conceiving of the new empirical object as something through which theoretical knowledge might be identified or confirmed (O'Doherty, 2008). As we already indicated in the introduction, attempts to 'still' colours for organizational purposes tend to auto-subvert: for example, from 'purity' to 'sickening discomfort' in the case of white (Kisacky, 2012); from 'alternative credibility' to 'corporate capture' in the case of green (DeLong and Guncu-Berg, 2012). The elusive and ambiguous nature of colour thus makes it resistant as the next topic ready for colonization and subsumption for purposes long established in organization studies, as has happened with for example literature (De Cock and Land, 2006) or space (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004).

As both Benjamin and Taussig repeatedly point out, one of capitalism's principal effects is the destruction of the conditions necessary for an adequate human experience; in this case colour experience or 'the colour of experience', to re-quote Caygill. To us this is what links Taussig's blue to Adorno's grey: Letting ourselves be affected by colour can bring about a displacement of our angle of vision and our mundane ways of being in the world, thus injecting contingency into our usual forms of experience and their interpretations and opening them up for future possibilities. Benjamin's wager,

then, has lost none of its urgency: only through a transformation in the experience of time and space

which colour facilitates can a new form of human collectivity emerge (Eiland and Jennings, 2014).[5]

"When will we cough blue?" (Taussig, 2008: 10).

Writing colour, writing organization

> Let Flaubert and Baudelaire be the markers for such a
> momentous event as the emergence of the bodily sensorium into
> literature and written language as such: I claim that before this
> moment the traditional literary apparatus is incapable of
> registering, or ill equipped to register, the kinds of sensations
> which I can only briefly illustrate here. We can adduce
> Baudelaire's description of a painted street sign: "a green so
> delicious it hurts"; or Flaubert's remark that all of *Salammbô* was
> written to convey a certain bilious shade of yellow (Jameson,
> 2015: 39).[6]

Having travelled from affect and colour theory to Adorno's grey and Taussig's blue, in this third and

final section we at least briefly seek to comment on the writing of colour as a writing of affect, with a

little nod to Baudelaire's green, Flaubert's yellow and Connellan's white. In her critique of current affect

thinking, Leys (2011) points out with serious misgivings that beyond "rather opaque philosophical-

speculative reflections" (p. 444) in, for instance, Massumi's work, "one finds oneself forced to provide

thick descriptions of life experiences of the kind that are familiar to anthropologists and novelists but

are widely held to be inimical to science" (p. 471). Indeed, recent contributions to the study of

organizational affect have not only advocated experimental methodological approaches in the quest

for empirically capturing rather than 'merely' theorizing affect; they have also experimented with thick

descriptions of affective encounters (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; Kenny and Fotaki, 2014). An exemplary

case is Connellan's exploration of white's affect in places such as a hospital, a church, a parliament, a

prison, and a university. Such attempts venture into the Benjaminian territory of coupling an "enhanced presence of mind" with an "involuntary mode of seeing" and sensing (Weigel, 2015: 348) that stays open to what befalls a person – in chromatic terms, to how colour disturbs body and thought (even the bodies and minds of critical theorists, as we have shown).

Of course, black marks on white paper constitute impoverished forms of chromatic infinity, resting solely on the contrast between monochrome surface and opaque inscription (Caygill, 1998: 12-13). But isn't this precisely the challenge in writing about affect? Can writing summon colour's affective intensities? Rhodes (2015: 300), in reflecting on 'writing organization' talks of the need to resist "those inhibitions where it is hard to know if it is 'me' or 'them' who is imposing constraints".[7] Jameson (2015: 41), whom we quoted at the start of this section, in discussing the emergence of affect in literature (as the expression of a new kind of content) warns about the fundamental compositional problems this poses for the writer: "How to deal with a stormy succession of affects and intensities... how the pull of affect is registered and inflects our writing..."

We have tried to convey how Steyerl's fluctuating monochromes problematize the age-old trope of the greyness of theory versus the colourfulness of life, and provoke the viewer to feel and think how colour (dis)organizes experience. Colour's force can be immanent in painting grey on grey. And Taussig's ventures into blue point to how colour can be immanent in writing, as do Jameson's (2015) references to Flaubert and Baudelaire. However, this entails the challenge of enacting immanent critique: of a reorganization of our modes of presenting scholarship towards a style that is immersed in colour constellations, where the words we produce blur with things and forces more than they seek to represent them. If colour walks, the question becomes: How can we make our accounts walk with colour?

The works of our warrantors can offer some preliminary advice. Goethe's sprawling montage of thick descriptions of colour experiments manages to convey the wonder and bafflement of being attuned to

and 'entering into' chromatics; of being struck and propelled further by colour's endless process of becoming in relational contrasts and configurations. It "slow[s] down or even block[s] and divert[s] the way by which we so speedily, even instantaneously, transform sensory knowledge into knowledge" (Taussig, 2009: 188; see also Beyes and Steyaert's (2012) notion of 'slow motion' in the study of organizational affect). We can thus gain an awareness of how the modulation of colour works on the human sensorium and learn to experience what our bodies know without us knowing it. It is worth noting that both Deleuze and Benjamin draw upon Goethe to think colour; thus the genealogy of thinking colour interferes with perceived boundaries between schools of thought (critical thinking/affect thinking) held to be inimical. It points to a style of scholarship and writing that Benjamin raised to a program of critical inquiry, which "favors simultaneity and constellation over continuity, similitude over representation or sign, and the detail or fractionary (*Bruchstück*) over the whole" (Weigel, 2015: 345). The awareness of colour introduces a perceptual ambiguity, denying a settled, stable viewpoint. This unsettling perceptual ambiguity which injects contingency into organizational phenomena should be embraced and not written out of our accounts of organization.

Third, the essayistic montage and juxtaposition of images and narratives enacted in *Adorno's Grey*, and their visual and textual colouring, offers an artistic answer to how the thinking of affect can be presented and performed. On a more conventionally scholarly terrain, Taussig's *What Color is the Sacred?* offers an example of a textual organization that interweaves and seems driven by flashes of colour that are taken from historical sources, novels and poetic experiments, colour theories and fieldwork notes. The writing appears both utterly digressive and strangely consistent, tracing and echoing how colour as organizational force is ever changing, ever connecting objects, discourses and human bodies as well as ever provoking sensations, which simultaneously turn us into docile consumers and shake us out of our complacency. Perhaps at the price of some rhetorical exuberance, which at times can seem somewhat overdone, Taussig incessantly seeks to conjure chromatic atmospheres that

pull the reader into what is described, asking for "a new and different art of reading" (Taussig, 2009: 189).

In sum, then: Experimenting with thick descriptions that enact colour's efficacy as force of organizing sense perception; proceeding through details, constellations or events of chromatics; composing relational and discontinuous montages that trace the organizational effects of colour across forms, objects and bodies – these are tentative lessons for a 'textual colourism' that can inform the writing of organizational affect.

Conclusion

At this point where we conclude our article it behoves us to outline what we see as its contribution to present and future research on the affective constitution of organization. We see this contribution as having four interrelated dimensions. First, we have set out to explore and theorize how colour, as a connecting thread of experience, animates matter and befalls human bodies and thus can be conceived of as an immanent force of organizational life and becoming. Approaching colour this way turns it into a bona-fide case of affect which goes far beyond normative approaches found in colour manuals used by designers and marketers, where colours (or combinations thereof) are supposed to elicit particular emotions in a fairly linear causal fashion. As such, ours is an explorative attempt, a map of beginnings that, we hope, will encourage further studies of the affective colour/spaces of organizing.

Second, there is ample inspiration on offer for an organizational scholarship interested in colour's affective force. One can turn to the writings of influential thinkers of affect such as Deleuze and Massumi. In addition, the broader history of critically thinking the effects of colour – what colour does rather than what colour is – offers a rich and varied reservoir of attempts to come to terms with colour-as-affect (Beyes, 2016). In this paper, we have singled out Benjamin's early fragments. They entail striking intuitions of, and reflections on, colour as medium of transformation as well as fundamental

insights of what we have called colour's critical ambiguity as both technology of organization and transformative force. More recently, Taussig's work offers a remarkable treatment of colour and its agency as a "medicine for rethinking reality" (Taussig, 2011: 51). These texts can lend a prosaic concreteness to how to study and think organizational affect. Thus, our focus on colour-as-affect also provides a meeting ground for two quite distinct traditions – critical-historical thinking (with Benjamin/Taussig) and affect thinking (with Deleuze/Massumi) – inevitably engendering all the "shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions" Deleuze (1995: 6) enjoyed so much and the "decentred reception, a distracted and diffuse encompassing that eschews contemplative absorption" that was so central to Benjamin's work (Eiland and Jennings, 2014: 517). Engaging with colour also helps to broaden the conceptual and historical horizon of studies of organizational affect that point to phenomena usually suppressed or marginalised in studies of organization; phenomena which have the potential to help reconsider or even disturb traditional organizational settings and experiences, thus "destabilizing the assumed yet already diverse and contested normalcy of what organization studies allows itself to be" (Rhodes, 2015: 299).

Third, Benjamin's intuition of colour as medium of transformation and his sensibility for colour experience offers the study of organization a distinct awareness of both colour's effects and affects *and* its constant oscillation between control and randomness – 'colour management' and colour as 'unmanageable thing'. We chose the two colour/spaces of Adorno's grey and Taussig's blue precisely because they so compellingly perform colour's ambiguity; and we have offered the notion of immanent critique as a reflection on how we might need to enter into, and move with, colours. We believe this presents a promising point of departure for organizational scholars who are interested in affect's critical potential.

Fourth and finally, the notoriously tricky endeavour of how to write affect – rather than lecturing on affect, of which this paper is perhaps guilty too – can find inspiration in colour writings. At

least from Goethe onwards there exists a history of experimenting with putting into words what colour-as-affect does. An apprenticeship in apprehending and writing colour thus opens up new trajectories in form and style for the black-on-white inscriptions of scholarly work.

We began our exploration with the putative chromophobia of (organizational) scholarship. It is perhaps fitting, then, to end with *Adorno's Grey*. For us this work of art brings together what we have tried to unfold on these pages as if under a magnifying glass: the affective lure of chromatics; its destabilizing force; its oscillation between control and liberation; its resistance to the age-old dichotomy of the grey of thinking versus the colours of life; and, correspondingly, the work's relational montage of images and sounds that pulls the viewer into its affective space as much as it propels him or her to think. Colours shape the way we sense and perceive, and we think in and with colours. Is an affective theorizing of organization not bound to become a chromatics of organizing? Steyerl lays bare the intertwinement of art and philosophy, of affect and thought, of colour and criticality. In so doing, she outlines the contours of a critical study of organizational affect and what it might achieve.

Notes

[1] The status of white encapsulates the shifting and culturally contingent conceptual history of colour. Anti-Newtonian in their approach to colour, diagnoses of Western chromophobia unwittingly follow Newton's foundational discovery of the colour spectrum in assuming that white (and black) are 'non-colours' and oppose the chromatic world to that of black and white. But according to the historian Michel Pastoureau (2009) white (and black) were treated as colours for centuries, even millennia, before Newton's chromatic revolution, and are often held as such today.

[2] Wood and Brown's (2011) article, which explicitly links back to their documentary film *Lines of Flight* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sc8yz1RPeYc), is one of the most interesting experiments in this respect. In their desire to find "the conditions for a novel experience in the making, under which a new

filmic affect is produced" in order to "give access to a range of 'intensely lived experiences' that can offer a route out of [certain] social, economic and cultural conditions" they both transcend and point to the limitations of the academic article (p.517; emphasis in original).

[3] Benjamin finds in children an attunement to chromatic differentiation that adults (learn to) lack: children "do not reflect but only see" (2011a: 2013).

[4] Berger and Christie's (1999) book of correspondence, *I send you this cadmium red...,* provides a marvellous experimental example. But not everyone can find such a sympathetic publisher like Eulàlia Bosch, enabling the reproduction of the exchanges of letters and painted pages – red, green, yellow, blue, black, gold – in a dazzling splendour of text and colour. She writes in a preface to the book: "The letters became a true spur to thinking critically and looking carefully... The colours reached me as organic elements that contained part of a meaning that could be shared, and part of an enigma whose answer could be sought in the depths of one's own memory. The story of a certain experience of colour was giving shapes and even names to ideas, sensations and feelings that, now named, seemed more accessible... I wanted to bring this adventure in perception to other readers. I wanted to reveal this chromatic scale, so far removed from the rigours of the colour tables."

[5] Steyerl and Taussig's labour of redeeming helps us in discerning the outlines of certain decisive historical interests of the present moment by uncovering and reconstructing a historical object that has been occluded. Benjamin calls this "the attempt to retain the image of history in the most inconspicuous arrangements of existence, in its detritus, as it were" (Benjamin and Scholem, 1989: 165). Colour can be considered such an "inconspicuous arrangement of existence" under the totalizing conditions of fully advanced capitalist organization where most of us have simply accepted the material and psychological parameters of the environment we have found ourselves in, and just 'get on' with things.

6 Jameson links the appearance of affect in the novel to the radical transformation of the experience of the body in the Europe of the 1840s, when "affect becomes the organ of perception of the world itself, the vehicle of my being-in-the-world" (Jameson, 2013: 43). From our perspective it is revealing that this emergence of affect is entwined with a turn to colour for the authors in question. Jameson's treatment of colour as affect – "a green so delicious it hurts" – also stands in contradistinction to those approaches which adduce particular singular meanings to colours.

7 The difficulty we face in writing on affect is exemplified by the reaction of the reviewers and editors to the first draft of this paper. They found it at times "pretentious" and "difficult to follow", with a "chromatic kaleidoscope of quotations from learned writers" being seen as simply distracting. In the revised version we tried to make our pursuit of colour's affect a little bit more subtle and understated – signposting more clearly to the reader what we were trying to achieve, whilst still attempting to let colour's affect shine through the conventional structure of an academic article. We were also struck by how the reviewers could not resist including some of their own colour reflections in their reviews: "The beautiful deep blue of the sky outside is encouraging me to close my laptop and leave the office in defiance of organisational norms, along the lines of the poem 'Naming of Parts'"; "… an in-depth discussion about a particularly fancy yacht that seemed to change colour depending on when we saw it – sometimes gun metal grey and at others almost white (we later decided it was silver)…". Perhaps there is no better example of the affective charge of colour… and our need to capture it in writing somehow.

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