RGB, You and Me: Differential Synesthetic Becomings and Feeling the Fold

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What we see is how we see: the witness of perception folding. We see the experience of feeling the fold. We see the quality of the abyss of perception's virtual infinity, we see the unseeable (the unbearable). Or better: we feel it in the amodal more-than of vision. We see-feel the vibratory force of purple edging to red, or parchment texturally haunted. We see-feel an edging into tendency, a durational velocity folding toward a more-than that continuously redraws the relation between seeing and feeling, between image and fold, between reddening and redness.

-Erin Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*

Between reddening and redness: Erin Manning's qualification offers a wonderful and productive entry point to thinking through the differences and movements between the stasis of what color is and the dynamism of what it does. Reddening; so often a gradient of the flesh and the shift, the quickening of shame, of desire, of inflammation, of heat through the flesh's networky landscapes and rolling topologies.

We see the experience of feeling the fold.

Or better: we feel it in the amodal more-than of vision. [1]

What happens when color is approached as one nexus of power relations, a conduit for more-than, a productive reification and force within itself? How do the collision and the collapse between and of color and emotion create a third, a fourth, a fifth, an innumerable array of technological, cultural, and affective relations?

This project, RGB: You and Me, situates one approach to these relations within the Wikipedia entry for 'Emotion" and Google Images. In August 2012, I took each of the 70 emotions listed in the entry and ran each individual emotion ('happiness' for example) through a Google Image search, saving the first 25 images for each emotion. I then used Photoshop's RGB 'average' tool on each of the 25 individual images. This tool finds the average color of a image containing many individual pixels of color and returns one solid average color for that image. I then composed a 5 x 5 grid for each emotion, so that each square within the grids represents one of the 25 images. I also included

the 'suggested related searches' that Google Images suggests for each emotion, which appear in parentheses after the title of each grid.

The grids then reveal color palette patterns across the 25 individual images for each specific emotion, allowing both the associated colors and the related terms to be seen as they are algorithmically structured. These evince the hegemonic, dominant norms of color associated with these popular representations of both the image and the emotion itself.

The entire series of grids and suggested related terms may be viewed at my website: http://meganbigelow.com/rgb-you-and-me

These colors within algorithmically generated representations of the image and emotions are not only tailored to my web history and data profile, but are situated within larger systemic social forces of race, class, gender, power, sexuality, ability, capacity and more. Technology is never neutral with regard to these systems, but is one of many conduits for such forces.

Manning offers, beautifully: "Wonder: when language begins to move with the ripples of what can only be felt in the saying". Taking up this idea of technology as conduit and placing it in relation to concepts of events, sense, and difference, [2] I wondered (and continue to wonder and consider) the many different directions in which this project could be taken, and what might continually emerge and be felt through different forms like color, shape, sound, and motion, and the repetition of processes and forms.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze notes "Repetition is this emission of singularities, always with an echo or resonance which makes each the double of the other, or each constellation the redistribution of another." [3]

What sort of echoes and constellations could be produced between redness and reddening? With this project, I'm primarily interested in posing a series of questions and relations (and thinking of form itself as a question and a relation) as possible entry points for thought, experiences, and the distribution of differential intensities. How does contrasting the stasis of redness with the dynamism of reddening distribute differential synesthetic intensities? Rather than taking a definitive position on what these thoughts and experiences are, my approach follows Deleuze's questions and framings—posed across multiple texts—of what things *do* and *produce*.

What is being propagated and produced by the event of these grids? The event of sound? The event of video?

For example: the first grid, Affection, is mostly dark browns, owing to how many of the images in the 'affection' search depicted lions in affectionate poses. Euphoria is largely purple, owing to how almost all of the images returned were of a purple colored perfume bottle, Calvin Klein's Euphoria. The Desire grid is composed almost entirely of images of a cell phone, HTC's "Desire" model.

The Anger grid is mostly reds and pinks, recalling the association of red with anger. I wonder: which qualifications of anger might be

rednesses, and which might be reddenings? How are much distinctions and productive capacities between redness and reddening distributed through the differential capacities of life distributions as conceptualized within Foucauldian biopolitical models of technological and affective governance?

In a similar way to the algorithm that decides which images show up as the first 25 in the Google Image search—itself produced by culture and a sociality to determine results—I also sought to recall how emotions themselves are socially and culturally produced through interaction with others and within social networks, and what role the thousands of images viewed across contexts has come to play in the perceptions, affects, and interactions as they are situated within larger social systems, the establishment of emotional norms, and the production of race, class, gender, power, sexuality, ability, capacity and more.

The mutable, ever-shifting elements of emotion, culture, the social, and the event itself are also evinced by the ever-changing list of the emotions in the Wikipedia entry. Throughout the iterations of this project, some of the emotions depicted in it are no longer listed on the Wikipedia page, and others have since been added. As of April 2014, the emotions added were confidence, courage, outrage, relief, and self-confidence, while boldness and fearlessness have been removed.

Deleuze asks: "The thought which is born in thought, the act of thinking which is neither given by innateness nor presupposed by reminiscence but engendered in its genitality, is a thought without

image. But what is such a thought, and how does it operate in the world?" [4]

"Instead of the enormous opposition between the one and the many, there is only the variety of multiplicity—in other words, difference." [5]

Consequently, some questions and relations to pose: What would happen by running these grids through a program which generates sounds from images? How might difference and the event of art, the event of sense itself be continually produced, with technology and my role as "artist" serving as conduits?

How could thinking synesthetically—one possible mode of thinking and becoming—about these grids be one of many possible entry points for considerations of how race, class, gender, power, sexuality, and more relate to the images returned in the search functions, particularly in approaching synesthesia as a distribution of differential intensities?

In problematizing the concept of a liberal, individual, autonomous viewer and user, what new space can be created and what can be brought to the event of sense and the production of difference? How is the problematization of a liberal, individual, autonomous viewer and user within the event of difference, synesthesia, and sense productive, and in what ways does that production produce new becomings?

How might a viewer-user hear joy in the sound generated from the Joy grid? How might they see it? How might the event of sound and

the event of color—the event of art—serve, instead, to continually produce the emotion, the viewer, the user themselves? Again, not as liberal, individual, autonomous selves, but as events of materials and the collisions, collapses, and contractions of forces? [6]

Deleuze notes: "The splendor and the magnificence of the event is sense. The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us." [7]

Running a few of the grids through the program which generated a unique soundscape for each image, I wondered what the program was hearing when it was processing the colors in the grid. How was it translating blues, browns, yellows, and oranges across forms? How was it moving and conducting entities through its code? How, as Manning puts it, was it continuously redrawing relations between entities and qualifications such as reddening and redness? [8]

From color, through the program's code, to a newly-coded sound, to a new experience and event—how were race, class, gender, power, sexuality, ability, capacity and more translated, reified, enforced, propagated, silenced, amplified, and more through these events?

Joy

As an example, here are a few different synesthetic form-events of Joy.

First, the suggested related terms: "the word joy", "jump for joy", "joy clipart", "happy happy joy joy":

The grid itself (on opposite page).

And the sound: https://soundcloud.com/meganbigelow/joy

Finally, a video which continuously loops all of the grids in and out of each other, recalling the interwoven, simultaneity of emotions and affects: http://vimeo.com/93005055 (Joy appears at 2:52).

In considering the event of sense itself, the event of art, the event of a viewer-user as the production of difference itself, as situated within and never separable from race, class, gender, power, sexuality, ability, capacity and more, how are emotions like joy produced?

Rather than impose a totalizing, teleological concept of joy and presuming that all human and non-human instances of subjects experience joy in one way, I'm more interested in viewing the relational aspects of emotions: not what joy is, but again, what it does and how it produces and is produced by and within race, class, gender, power, sexuality, ability, capacity and relations.
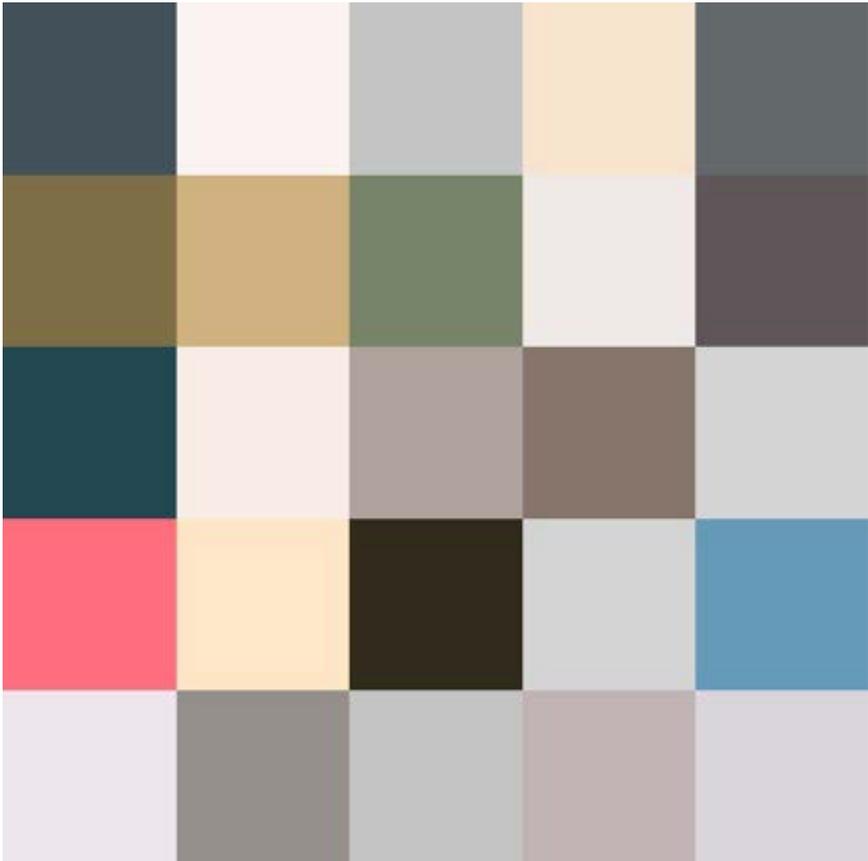
fig 1. "Joy"

Again, I pose these series of questions not as deterministic, declarative statements, but as one of many possible entry points into a myriad, flowing consideration of becomings.

Deleuze, on Spinoza's concepts of joy and sadness, notes: "But as conscious beings, we never apprehend anything but the effects of these compositions and decompositions: we experience joy when a body encounters ours and enters into composition with it, and sadness when, on the contrary, a body or an idea threaten our own coherence." [9]

What might a relational, Spinozist analysis of the complex assemblages of race, class, gender, power, sexuality, ability, capacity and more, one that considers the productive and destructive components of joy and sadness and utilizes synesthetic modes of thinking and becoming... do?

Amit Rai, in Race Racing: Four Theses on Race and Intensity, [10] proposes that "a much sharper distinction must be made between race as reactive dialectics and intensive processes of becoming". He elaborates that "it is the latter that leads directly to a consideration of the complex ontology of sensation" and that "assemblages of becomings are forms of intensity-capture that qualitatively modify the becomings themselves." [11]

What might such a productive, modification-in-motion consideration of the "forms of intensity-capture" such as form, sound, and video

do for projects that seek to address deeply ingrained, systemic social inequalities?

Rai discusses "race as sets of intensive variations in ecologies of sensation distributed unevenly and with uneven effects across populations through processes that form assemblages of perception and media" and offers in the third thesis:

> "These coevolutionary processes suggest that all becomings are ecological in that they mobilize important available resources to refunction correlated flows of energy, information, biomass, sensation, and technology. A corollary of coevolution in media-machinic assemblages of bodies and technologies is that there will always also be emergent properties, capacities, and affordances as an effect of this refunctioning of correlated processes." [12]

Here, I'm interested in Rai's formulation of correlated processes, and how, as he notes "if one is to consistently think of race racing as an intensive process, the multiplicity of race lacks any resemblance to itself; race racing multiplicities give form to processes, not to this or that final product," [13] and how to approach critical examinations of phenomena within the project such as the representation of race in the source images that compose the grids themselves.

For example, fully half of the source images (12 out of 25) for 'Jealousy' depicted jealousy as a triangulation between three bodies. 11 out of these 12 images depicted a white male / white female couple embracing

fig 2. "Jealousy"

or showing affection; the 'jealous' third party was represented as a white female. The sole image which depicted a man as the jealous third party consisted of an image of a white man and an Asian woman walking away in the foreground, arm in arm, from an Asian man who was positioned in the background. [14]

How might we think—synesthetically and through intensive, differential, distributed, synesthetic becomings—of the form-events such as the representations of race in the source images, the colors in the grid, the sounds made from the grid, the video of the grids weaving in and out of each other as, following Rai "coevolutionary processes" and, importantly, consider what "emergent properties, capacities, and affordances" flow from these events?

What are they producing? What are they not producing? What differential, distributed rates of change and intensities of race, class, gender, power, sexuality, ability, and capacity are translated, reified, enforced, propagated, silenced, amplified, and more through these events?

Between redness and reddening: the quickening of shame, of desire, of inflammation, of heat through the flesh's networky landscapes and rolling topologies—what is produced?

Notes

[1] Manning, E. (2013). *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*. Durham: Duke University Press.

[2] Deleuze, G. (1990). *The Logic of Sense*. New York: Columbia University Press.; Deleuze, G. (1994). *Difference and Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[3] Deleuze (1994). p. 201.

[4] Deleuze (1990) p. 167.

[5] Deleuze (1994). p. 182.

[6] Deleuze (1990); Deleuze (1994).

[7] Deleuze (1990). p. 149.

[8] Manning (2013).

[9] Deleuze, G. (1988). *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. San Francisco: City Lights Books. p. 19.

[10] Rai, Amit S. "Race Racing: Four Theses on Race and Intensity." *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 40.1-2 (2012): 64-75. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/wsq.2012.0018

[11] Rai (2012). p. 67.

[12] Rai (2012). p. 70.

[13] Rai (2012). p.67.

[14] Bigelow, M. (2014) "RGB: You and Me (A Queer, Feminist Analysis of Emotion, Affect, and Materiality within Google Images)". *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, No.5. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7264/N3TQ5ZTW

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