



The Uses of Color in US Popular Cultural Production and Representation

A dark urban setting scattered with dots of light. Yellow gas flames shoot up against a glowing red horizon, creating an almost hellish feel. Flying cars pierce the atmosphere, revealing the orange smog haze that reappears in urban sequences throughout the movie. As the camera moves closer to futuristic, monumental buildings, cold white beams of light transition to interiors dominated by blue hues. Sequences in the Tyrell Corporation are marked by cool tones as opposed to Deckard's warm-toned private spaces. How would we feel and think about a cult film like *Blade Runner* (1982) if cinematographic choices about color had been made differently?

When we enjoy a popular cultural expression—be it film, graphic novel, play, videoclip, videogame, or live performance—color is fundamental to our perception and emotional response to the world it depicts. Whether articulated by means of costume design, mise-en-scène, or carefully structured palettes, color helps to layer narratives and convey nonverbal meaning across popular cultural media. Playing with hue, saturation, and brightness, color schemes have often become the main subliminal element that influences our perception and interpretation of situation and mood within the narrative. Thoughtful application of color can draw (or divert) attention and create compositional elements and specific atmospheric effects. It can be used as a means to convey association—with ideologies, sensations, objects' and characters' distinguishing qualities—as well as transitions of narrative, place, situation, character, or states of mind. Color can be exploited to produce a visual counterpoint, suggest moral standing, personalize characters by their identification with a specific hue, and mark their development throughout the story. Sometimes purposefully limited palettes are exploited to recreate historical periods—as well as a sense of period nostalgia—climate conditions, and oppressive or liberating sensations.

Yet for all its uses, color has often been overlooked in academic research. This call for papers invites both full papers and shorter critical reviews delving into color-related issues and representation strategies. Suggested fields of analysis might include but are not limited to:

- Color as a tool for structuring narrative elements and sequences
- The insertion of color to convey specific messages and moods
- Color and symbolism
- The purposeful absence of color: black & white choices in contemporary film
- Hues and words: when the use of color is verbal
- History and evolution of the use of color in specific media
- The metaphorical uses of color in the representation of ethnicity and gender
- Transgression of conformity and conventions through color
- Cinema and the advent of color



- Color in barrio urban culture: murals, tattoos, architectural heritage expressions
- Advertising and the strategic use of color
- The use of color and light in (musical) theater
- Uses of light in post-apocalyptic film

PopMeC accepts submissions of **full papers** (3000 words max. references excluded) about any aspect related to the call. We also welcome **critical reviews** (max. 1-2000 words total), articulated as a commentary on one specific popular culture product from the call's standpoint on the use of color.

The deadline for submission of full papers and critical reviews is July 11, 2021.

Send your proposal to popmec.call@gmail.com attaching your text, inclusive of a short bio (100-120 words), name, affiliation, and email contact in a single file (.doc, .docx, .odt). The papers will be **peer-reviewed** on a rolling basis by our editorial team and external collaborators, who will get back to you as soon as possible.

The works accepted will be published on our platform (<https://popmec.hypotheses.org> ISSN: 2660-8839) as part of a special section dedicated to the subject. According to the feedback and participation the call raises, we will consider proposing the publication of an edited volume collecting selected contributions.

Please, check our [author guidelines page](#) and don't hesitate to drop us a line with any doubt or inquiry you might have in this respect. The submissions will be handled by the related section editors (<https://popmec.hypotheses.org/team-2>), so feel welcome to contact them directly or to send an email to popmec.call@gmail.com to consult your idea (possibly by means of a max. 350 words abstract) and receive feedback in order to develop the longer text.

Selected bibliography

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Thematic suggestions: a very limited list just to get your inspiration started

Film

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968); A Clockwork Orange (1971); American Beauty (1999); Batman (in almost all its iterations); Blade Runner (1982); Chocolat (2000); Dick Tracy (1990); Do the Right Thing (1989); Elephant Man (1980); Emma (2020); Her (2013); The Hunger Games (2012); Mi Familia (1995); Nebraska (2013); Rosemary's Baby (1968); The Fall (2006); The Godfather (1972); The Matrix (1999-2003); The Road (2009); The Shining (1980); The Sixth Sense (1999); The Stepford Wives (1975); The Wizard of Oz (1939); Traffic (2000); Up (2009); Us (2019); Vertigo (1958); What Dreams May Come (1998); Babel (2006), Sin City (2005).

The work of or related to directors such as: Wes Anderson, Tim Burton, Baz Lurhman, Guy Ritchie, Robert Rodriguez, and Denis Villeneuve.

The work of or related to cinematographers such as: Thierry Arbogast, Michael Gioulakis, Vittorio Storaro, Peter Suschitzky, and Robert Yeoman.

TV series

Altered Carbon (2018-2020); From Dusk Till Dawn (2014-2016); Hannibal (2013-2015); Pose (2018-present); Preacher (2016-2019); Ratched (2020); Stranger Things (2016-present); The Handmaid's Tale (2017 - present); The Queen's Gambit (2020).

Comics and graphic novels

Barrier (2015-2017); Deadly Class (2014-present); Pretty Deadly (2014-present); Shade the Changing Girl (2016-2017); The Killing Joke (1988); The Multiversity: Pax Americana: In Which We Burn (2014-2015)

The work of or related to colorists such as: Laura Allred, Jordie Bellaire, June Chung, Matt Wilson, and Muntsa Vicente.