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COLOUR TERMS IN *SUDDEN FICTION*

Nataliya Panasenko

University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava,
917 01, Slovakia, Trnava, Nám. Jozefa Herdu, 2

The paper presents the analysis of colour perception and its interpretation in psychology and symbolism; it highlights colour properties and the approaches to colour studies largely in linguistics. One of the features of colours is their ability to express human emotions and feelings, either positive or negative (verbally/ nonverbally), and to create certain atmosphere in the situation abound in colours. Shades of colours can be regarded as a lexico-semantic group formed by adjectives and nouns, which can be simple, derived, and compound words. Short texts include many colour terms expressing such colour properties, as hue, saturation, tone, lightness, intensity; each of them contributes to decoding of some culture-specific features hidden in Sudden fiction.

The analysis of Sudden fiction *shows that short stories have specific composition, where colour terms perform different functions. Descriptive functions are mainly connected with focal colours and identify objects' properties. Other functions, such as character-generating, associative, metaphoric, symbolic, semiotic, and culture specific are more complicated. Their identification implies additional knowledge of cultural, social, and historical planes.*

Key words: *colour terms, colour properties, colour in psychology, symbolism of colour, colour in literary texts, radicalization,* Sudden fiction*, functions of colours*

Introduction

A human being receives the information about the surrounding world using different channels: vision, touch, taste, smell, and hearing. Vision is the main information-processing channel, due to which we can identify such physical properties of objects as size, colour, form, evaluate distance to them, etc. If we speak about the acquisition of colour terms, a clear distinction should be made between the acquisition of colour vision and the verbalization of colour vision [16, p. 43]. Colour belongs to the universal semantic categories and can be found in many languages. Berlin and Kay [2, p. 2] have identified eleven basic color categories: white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, and grey, which they call the focal terms.

If we treat colours in a different way, we will see that their functions go far beyond specific colour naming. They may be considered as signals, symbols, codes, have figurative meaning, and serve as means of creating specific images or atmosphere, especially when it concerns literary texts. Colours may be considered as signals, bearing primary and secondary coding. Primary coding is represented by a set of morphemes, naming specific colours, their shades, saturation, etc. Secondary coding is culture specific and may be "intended" and "intuitive". These terms were offered by Wyler [16, p. 138], who differentiates between "intended" and "intuitive (secondary) coding". By "intended (secondary) coding" he means the usage of some colours as specific signals affecting certain behavior. As the illustration of secondary coding, it is possible to give here the following examples; examples from *Sudden fiction* are analyzed below. In many cultures red has been attributed the meaning of "danger", possibly in loose or close association with "fire", whereas *green* is often associated with "spring", "life', "growth", "freshness" (compare, e.g., *'green years'* or *'green wound'*); *white* occurs as a sign or signal of "purity", "innocence" or "chastity" as in the dress of the bride while *black* signals "sorrow", "grief" or "death" as in the pall or the col-

our of a hearse [16, p. 139]. But we must always take into account a culture-specific component, because in some cultures the colour of mourning is *white* (Australia, Eastern Asia, Cambodia) and the bride's dress is *red* (China, Pakistan, Vietnam, India). It is connected with the symbolic meaning these colours have in local cultures.

We see that colour terms (CTs) are very closely connected with different fields of knowledge: history, culture, ethnology, anthropology, not to mention linguistics, physics, physiology, and psychology.

Colour and its properties

Colour physics, optics and psychologically or anthropologically oriented colour research generally focuses on 11 focal colours described by Berlin and Kay. These are the so-called "simple colour terms" or "macrocolours" [16, p. 56]. Scientists base their colour classifications on the frequencies of wave lengths and the three parameters "hue", "value" and "saturation" [16, p. 54].

Another important approach to CTs is the so-called "radicalization", which implies the loss of differentiation and descriptive precision. The difference between a "macro-colour name" and a "radicalized colour name" is that the "radicalized colour name" can in some cases be the name of a colour which is different from the actual hue of an object. Well-known and widely accepted colour designations, in fact, do not give precise colour of the designated objects: 'white coffee' is not white; to be more precise it is 'brownish' or 'beige', 'white wine' is of a 'yellowish' or 'greenish' colour. Wyler [16] explains in such a way many examples, the most interesting are 'red hair', 'the blacks', 'the whites', etc. Colours denoting human races deserve special attention; they will be discussed below.

Approaches to colour study

Colour designation is an important element of the description and differentiation of the objects surrounding a human being. No wonder that colour has many a time been the psychologists' and physiologists' and many other specialists' object of research. Botanists use a specific colour atlas for the plant species identification; there are special tables of different colour shades and hues used in the textile industry; painters use specific terms for colour naming, but we should concentrate our attention on those approaches, which are more important for the literary text analysis.

Colour and psychology

Perception of colour based on psychological point of view is subjective and connected with human psychophysical reaction to the source of colour. It depends on individual perception and understanding of various colours. One may consider *red* as the most beautiful colour of all; it may be the symbol of happiness for somebody, whereas another person may perceive it in a different, not so optimistic way, as a colour evoking anger or jealousy.

Miller [1981: 336, cited after 16, p. 90], e.g., distinguishes three colour categories, which, in themselves, form a similar rhythm: 1. "intrinsic colours" (which we might, in many instances, understand as radicalized colours or colour names: "snow" is intrinsically 'white'; "grass" is intrinsically 'green', "lemons" are intrinsically yellow; 2. "accidental colours": not remembered accurately, the colours of a sofa, of clothes, etc. where the other than basic color designations are used, and 3. landmark colours (which seem largely to correspond to focal colours or primary or basic colours), such as 'red', 'green', 'yellow', 'blue'; 'black', 'white', which can be easily recognized and related to objects (whereas in many instances, again, radicalization occurs).

From psychological aspect not only colour terminology, but also colour harmony, colour preference and colour symbolism can be taken into consideration. Symbols carrying strong emotional connotations can affect our colour perception. In some cases, we may speak of the designations, which appeared thanks to the synesthesia of different information procession channels, like vision and smell, vision and touch, i.e. "the sensation of warmth and cold, …richness, freshness, etc. can also determine the observer's reaction to a colour: *warm red – cool blue, cold blue; light pink – heavy purple; luscious green – opulent red; fresh yellow*" [16, p. 107].

Colour and symbolism

It is a very interesting topic including different aspects of culture, politics, art, literature, religion, and astrology. In any dictionary of symbols colour is paid attention to. Cirlot, e.g., offers the following classification of colours: "the first group embraces warm 'advancing' colours, corresponding to processes of assimilation, activity and intensity (*red, orange, yellow* and, by extension, *white*), and the second covers cold, 'retreating' colours, corresponding to processes of dissimilation, passivity and debilitation (*blue, indigo, violet* and, by extension, *black*), *green* being

an intermediate, transitional colour spanning the two groups" [3, p. 52]. The idea to use temperature sensations comes from psychology and it is closely connected with colour perception.

Very often specific colours are attributed to different planets in astrology: Mars is *red* (war, blood, tension); the Sun is *yellow* (coming from the Sun-God Apollo), the Moon is *white*, Venus is *green* (vegetation, life), Pluto is *black*, etc., though these colours may not coincide in different classifications. Cirlot, e.g., attributes *gold* to the Sun and *silver* to the Moon. It helps understand why in China *yellow* being associated with the sun, was the emblem of rank and authority, the sacred privilege of the royal family. He states that "for the Egyptians, *blue* was used to represent truth. The mother goddess of India is represented as *red* in colour (contrary to the usual symbolism of *white* as the feminine colour), because she is associated with the principle of creation and *red* is the colour of activity per se" [3, p. 55]. Folklore of many countries is based on the struggle between good and bad, *white* and *black*, light and dark forces.

Cirlot [3, p. 53] names the following most popular symbols of colours: "*red* is associated with blood, wounds, death-throes and sublimation; *orange* with fire and flames; *yellow* with the light of the sun, illumination, dissemination and comprehensive generalization; *green* with vegetation, but also with death and lividness; *light blue* with the sky and the day, and with the calm sea; *dark blue* with the sky and the night, and with the stormy sea; *brown* and *ochre* with the earth; and *black* with the fertilized land". Analyzing the concepts of FIRE and WATER, Davydyuk and Panasenko [4] combine them with *red* and *blue* colours, the masculine and feminine as well as with the Chinese symbols Yang-Yin.

If we touch upon different aspects of culture, we can't but mention the role of colour in priests' canonicals in Russian Orthodox Church, which use seven colours of the rainbow. Each colour has its specific meaning and is used during specific services and ceremonies. *Golden* (and *yellow* of different shades) is the tsarist colour used in Sunday liturgy; *white* canonicals are used during Easter, Christmas, Transfiguration, Ascension Day and during the sacrament ceremonies: Church Wedding and christening; monks and nuns are mainly dressed in *black*.

Colour and linguistics

Colour as an object of study occupies a special place in linguistics. Every language has an immense number of sources for naming colour sensations. Every language can create expressions describing the colour of an object by indicating similarity to another object. Not does language only consist of basic colour terms, it has morphological and syntactic forms to create complex colour terms [10]. In many languages, CTs mainly represented by adjectives and nouns, perform different functions, one of them is creating images (by metaphors or epithets) [see, e.g., 11] and "their number seems to be unlimited" [16, p. 51].

In 1992 Wyler wrote: "What is really discussed in the majority of studies on colour are physiological, neurophysiological, anthropological, chemical, physical or color-metric issues. Colours have been discussed down the ages by philosophers, scientists, anthropologists, psychologists, dye and paint manufacturers, art teachers, art critics and so forth, but surprisingly seldom by linguists" [16, p. 52].

I have to disagree with him, for words denoting colours are considered to be a favourite topic with linguists. Some scholars examined properties of a definite colour [13; 14]; others make the comparative analysis of colour properties in one or several languages [5]. Most interesting, in my opinion, are the studies of the CTs in belle-letters style [9], though they are less numerous. In literary texts, CTs are used not with the purpose of objects' descriptions, they "rather foreground the colour of an object"; they create the specific atmosphere, "a certain uniqueness of scene, give certain objects more prominence, and help the reader see in colour or have symbolic function" [16, p. 164].

Colour in *Sudden fiction*

The aim of this research is to find out what functions CTs play in *Sudden fiction* texts. This genre has different names: flash fiction, including microfiction, microstories, short-shorts, short short stories, very short stories, postcard fiction, and nanofiction. Its characteristics are brevity, specific plot, and a twist or surprise at the end [15]. Now short-short stories have gained great popularity because of their unusual composition and laconicism. I would say, that this genre is based on defeated expectancy, which was in detail analyzed by Kupchyshyna and Davydyuk [8]. In this research, different methods are used. Stylistic analysis helped identify functions of some stylistic devices connected with CTs; these devices are mainly metaphor, personification, epithet, simile, hyperbole, grotesque, and defeated expectancy. I also use semantic analysis with the purpose to identify the structure of lexical units denoting spe-

cific colour and its shades, and linguo-cultural analysis, which highlights culture-specific features of some CTs.

For analysis there have been chosen 28 (out of 55) short stories, which contain different CTs. Some colours belong to 11 focal colours (*yellow, blue, red,* etc.); others are based on the radicalization combined with such colour properties, as hue and saturation (*bright-dyed denim, peach shade, sky-blue, pale blue*) or have colour standard of natural origin (*ochre and carmine, silver, lemon yellow*). As it comes from the examples, their morphological structure is different. It is possible to identify their function in the text as descriptive. In the text "Roth's Deadman" by Joe David Bellamy [12], the author uses many adjectives (*yellow* and *blue* are mostly often used): *blue, black, jaundiced, scarlet, greenish, brown, purple,* and *red*. These colours are connected with the man who died in the hospital. They help the reader see the atmosphere of the hospital ward and to some extent reflect the physiological processes that take place in a body after death. E.g.: "*The plastic intravenous tube was still taped at the ankle, the swollen* ***yellow*** *ankle,* ***yellow*** *and swollen as the face and neck of the man, fifty-four years old according to his wristband, now dead, admitted three days previously… The hair was pure white above the* ***jaundiced*** *face – and the eyes had been* ***blue, very light blue*** *and surprisingly transparent when Roth first saw them…*" [12, p. 151].

Yellow is here associated with the skin of a patient, the illness, and lack of vitality. Thus, CTs in this text perform not only the descriptive, but also associative function. As it is impossible to make the detailed analysis of all the texts under discussion, let us concentrate our attention on several colours and show their role in the text. At first I will present traditional CT understanding and then reveal its meaning in the text.

BLUE

It is the intrinsic colour connected with the sky and water. Bennet [1, p. 49-52] describes 'blue' in colour collocations on several pages. The most interesting are the following ones: "1) **loyalty, constancy** (*true-blue*); 2) **relating to morals** (*blue laws*); 3) **pornographic** (*blue film*); 4) **in low spirits** (*blue mood*); 5) (of women) **learned, pedantic** (*blue-stocking*); 6) (as a noun) **the sky, the sea** (*out of the blue*)." In general, this colour has a positive aspect and is associated with Heaven and the sea. People often go to the sea resort on holidays, thus it can also be associated with leisure and pleasant past time.

As a symbol, "*blue* is the color most often associated with issues of the spirit and intellect, all forms of water and can be feminine" [4]. Protas writes, "it is linked to loyalty, fidelity, constancy, and chastity. Many babies are born with *blue* eyes, thus innocence and purity can be attributed to the color. Its link to the sky also connotes eternity and immensity, time and space" [6]. It is also connected with witchcraft.

The next short story under discussion is "The Cliff" by Charles Baxter. A boy and an old man are approaching the sea shore. The old man asks if the boy smokes or drinks wine or had relations with women. The boy is a fifteen-year-old innocent teenager. The old man promises to teach him some magic. They see "*the long line of* ***blue*** *water through the trees*"; the boy wears "***faded blue jeans*** *and a sweatshirt*". After some 'magic' rituals "*The boy felt the edge of the cliff with his feet, jumped, and felt the magic and the horizon lifting him up and then out over the water, his body parallel to the ground. He took it into his mind to swoop down toward the cliffs, and then to veer away suddenly… He shouted with happiness. … The boy flew in great soaring circles. He tumbled in the air, dove, flipped, and sailed. His eyes were dazzled with* ***the blue*** *also, and like the old man he smelled the sea salt… But of course he was a teen-ager. He was grateful to the old man for teaching him the spells. But this – the cliffs,* ***the sea, the blue sky,*** *and the sweet wine – this was the old man's style, not his*" [12, p. 45].

Here the colours used by the author play an important role in creating two male personages: *blue* is associated with the sky, the sea, innocence, and magic; it is also a typical denim colour.

RED

Unlike *blue, red* is a masculine colour [4]. Its associations are mainly negative: fire, blood, war, terror, danger and the like. Bennet [1, p. 60-63] describes the following collocations with this colour: "1) **radical, communist or connected with these** (*red propaganda*); 2) **special, ceremonial** (*lay out the red carpet, a red-letter day*); 3) **blood-stained** (*red-handed*); 4) **marked by blood and/or fire**."

In the Dictionary of symbols, *red* is called "an emotionally charged color. It is associated with the sun and all gods of war, anger, blood-lust, vengeance, and fire. It can also mean love, passion, health, and/or sexual arousal" [6].

In the short story "Even Greenland" by Barry Hannah, the events unfold in the pilot's cabin. The plane is on fire: "*The wings were* ***turning red.*** *I guess you'd call it* ***red****. It was a shade against dark blue that*

*was **mystical flamingo**, very spacey-like, **like living blood. Was the plane bleeding?***" [12, p. 7]. The pilots are arguing and quarelling in the air, discussing the girl they both love. One of the pilots catapults himself, the second pilot, John, perishes together with the plane. Later the pilot comes back to this place: "*Celeste and I visit **the burn** on the blond sand under one of those black romantic worthless mountains five miles or so out from Miramar base.*" [12, p. 8]. Here we have military pilots (war), fire, death, anger, and blood. The author uses such stylistic devices, as sustained metaphor ("***mystical flamingo***"), simile ("***like living blood***") and personification (***Was the plane bleeding?***). The functions of red are symbolic, associative and descriptive.

BLACK AND WHITE

BLACK

In many languages and cultures, *black* is associated with something unpleasant, has a strong negative connotation and is the antonym to *white*. Bennet [1, p. 47-49] enumerates 'black' in the following collocations: "1) **dark** (*black hole*); 2) **soiled, dirty** (*your hands are black*); 3) **malignant, evil, connected with the Devil** (*black deeds, black magic*); 4) **severe, deadly, disastrous** (*black fast*); 5) **of or pertaining to the negro race** (*Black Power, Black Studies*); 6) (of a countenance or of the look of things) **angry, threatening** (*a black look, to look black*); 7) **macabre** (*black comedy*)."

Robley Wilson, Jr in the short story "Thief" deliberately uses black colour many a time. Judging from the title, events, unpleasant to someone, take place. At the airport a man "*is waiting at the airline ticket counter when he first notices the young woman. She has **glossy black** hair pulled tightly into the knot at the back of her head – the man imagines it loosed and cascading to the small of her back – and carries over the shoulder of her leather coat a heavy **black** purse. She wears **black** boots of soft leather*" [12, p. 168]. He notices this woman once again: "*he catches sight of **the black-haired** girl in the leather coat. She is standing near a Travelers Aid counter, deep in conversation with a second girl, a blonde in a cloth coat trimmed with gray fur*" [12, p. 168.]. Suddenly the man notices that his wallet is missing. He sees "**the black-haired** girl (***Ebony-Tressed Thief***, the newspapers will say)" [12, p. 169] and asks her to give his wallet back. "*She pulls **the black** bag onto her lap, reaches into it and draws out a wallet*". The man opens the wallet and sees that it is not his. It belongs to a blond woman who saw her wallet in his hands and cried "'*Stop, thief! Stop that man'! It occurs to the man that he cannot even prove his own identity to the policeman.*" [12, p. 170]. Two weeks later after these horrible events the post brings his wallet intact; nothing is missing.

With the help of *black* colour the image of the thief is created. The girl is dressed in *black*, has *dark black* hair, a *black* bag and the wallet is also *black*. Here we come across the case of defeated expectancy. This text looks like a macabre or grotesque horror story. The function of *black* here is character creating.

WHITE

This colour is opposite to *black* and has correspondingly positive associations connected with light.

Bennet [1, p. 64-66] offers the following collocations with this CT: 1) **good, favoured, liked** (*white boy, white-headed*); 2) **very clean** (*white room*); 3) **innocent, harmless** (*a white lie, white magic, white war*); 4) **light-coloured, transparent** (*white coal*); 4) **white-haired, hoary** (*a white beard*); 5) **pale** (*white-faced*).

As a symbol it can represent either innocence or the ultimate goal of purification, light, air, life, holiness, love, and redemption [6].

White and *black* (as well as *yellow* and *red*) have one more important function: they serve for the identification of human races. 'White people' are supposed to have a 'white' skin although we consider a 'rosy' or 'slightly brown' complexion to be the norm for white people. 'Black people' are said to be 'black' although the colour of their skin may range from 'coffee brown' to 'coal black'. 'White' in 'white people' has a semantic feature [+EUROPEAN] including White Americans and a few others, whereas 'black' in the context of people or person has a component [-EUROPEAN] and, considering racist or political bias, even a component [+SUPERIOR] [6, p.180]. In all such cases, CTs perform not descriptive, but rather a culture specific function.

We know a few novels describing life of black people and the whites who were superior to them or were their owners ("Uncle Tom's Cabin" by H. Beecher Stowe, "Gone with the Wind" by M. Mitchell) or the novels, in which people were ill-treated and accused only because of the black colour of their skin ("To Kill a Mocking Bird" by H. Lee or "The Path of Thunder" by P. Abrahams). But times have changed and the situation is radically different from what it was centuries ago.

The short story "The Neighbor" by Russell Banks is based on two colours: *black* and *white*: "*He was **a***

black man** in his fifties, she **a white woman** the same age, **his children** (from a previous marriage) **were black, her children** (also from a previous marriage) **were white**. Everyone else in town was **white" [12, p. 164]. And these are also the colours of day and night when events unfold. The black man bought "*for one hundred dollars an unclaimed, chocolate-colored trotter, an eight trotter, an eighteen-year-old mare named Jenny Lind.*" [12, p. 164]. He bought her at night. The horse was cheap, because she was very old. He imagined how his wife would go shopping driving the chocolate-colored mare down passing by his neighbor's house, who was a white man. But, alas, his dreams have never come true, because "*all day long, the two teen-aged sons and the two teen-aged daughters rode the mare, bareback, up and down the dirt road, galloping past the neighbor's house… A hundred times they rode the old horse full-speed along that half-mile route. **Silvery waves** of sweat covered her heaving sides and neck, and her large, watery eyes bulged from the exertion, and late in the afternoon, as the sun was drifting quickly down behind the pines in the back of the house, the mare suddenly veered off the road and collapsed on the front lawn of the neighbor's house and died there.*" [12, p. 165]. It was completely dark and the neighbor couldn't see the horse. He brought the lantern and was waiting for his new neighbours to come home. "*The neighbor was a young man, and while a dead animal was nothing new to him, the sight of a grown man **with black skin**, weeping, and **a white woman** sitting next to him, also weeping, both of them slowly stroking the cold nose of a horse ridden to death – that was something he'd never seen before*" [12, p. 165]. He offered his help to carry the horse's body with his tractor next day, when there will be light in the morning.

Here *black* and *white* strengthen the contrast not between the skin colour, but between light and darkness, good and evil, life and death, mourning and sympathy performing symbolic and semiotic functions.

COMBINATIONS OF DIFFERENT COLOURS

There are several texts where a variety of different colours is used by their authors, like "The Vertical Fields" by Fielding Dawson (description of different sorts of flowers) or "The Coggios" by Sharyn Layfield (description of the garden and immaculate white table cloth as a symbol of family decent traditions), but I would like to give the example from the text "The King of Jazz" by Donald Barthel.

There are some studies proving that music evokes some colour associations [7]. The discussion of these materials on the Internet has the title "Every song has a color – and an emotion – attached to it". Not to be led too far away from *Sudden fiction,* let us come back to the short story, where a sort of competition took place among the jazzmen. Some of them claimed to be the king of jazz and had to prove it. They started "*that's Hokie's famous 'English sunrise' way of playing. Playing with **lots of rays** coming out of it, some **red** rays, some **blue** rays, some **green** rays, some **green stemming** from **a violet center**. Some **olive stemming from a tan center** –*" [12, p. 11]. Colour and music is a very interesting topic deserving special attention. The function of CTs here is creating images, i.e. metaphoric.

Summing up

In the literary text under consideration, one of the functions of colours is characterization of nature objects, artefacts, created by human beings, and appearance of the main protagonists. We have the ground to speak about such colour properties as hue, lightness, saturation, not to mention radicalization. It is possible to divide colours into three groups: characterizing nature objects, artefacts and a group focusing on appearance of the main protagonists and their emotional state. Some CTs function in the text as stylistic devices (metaphor and its varieties, defeated expectancy, allegory, grotesque, etc.), contributing to the image creation. Other CTs (like *black* and *white*) not only denote human races, but serve good examples of radicalization. Depending on the object of description, CTs in *Sudden fiction* may perform different functions: descriptive, associative, character generating, metaphoric, symbolic, semiotic, and culture specific.

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About the author:

Nataliya Panasenko – Doctor of Philology, Professor at the Chair of Language Communication, University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. Spheres of research and professional interests: stylistics, text linguistics, cognitive linguistics, linguopoetics, creative writing. E-mail cindy777@mail.ru.

ТЕРМИНЫ ЦВЕТА В *МАЛОЙ ПРОЗЕ*

Н.И. Панасенко

Университет Свв. Кирилла и Мефодия в Трнаве,
Пл. Йозефа Герду, 2. Трнава, Словакия 917 01

Аннотация: *Данная статья представляет анализ восприятия цвета и его интерпретации в психологии и символизме, освещает свойства цвета, подходы к его изучению, главным образом, в лингвистике. Одним из свойств цвета является его способность выражать человеческие эмоции и чувства, как положительные, так и отрицательные (вербально/невербально) и создавать тем самым определённую атмосферу в ситуации, когда цвета в ней преобладают. Различные цветовые оттенки формируют лексико-семантическую группу, объединяющую прилагательные и существительные, которые могут быть простыми, производными и сложными. Рассмотренные автором рассказы включают много терминов, выражающих такие свойства цвета, как оттенок, насыщеннность, цветовой тон, светлоту и интенсивность; каждый из них в определённой мере способствует успешному декодированию некоторых культурологических фрагментов информации, скрытых в текстах Малой прозы, анализ которой показывает, что эти тексты имеют специфическую композицию и что термины цвета выполняют в ней различные функции. Дескриптивные функции главным образом связаны с фокусными цветами;*

они обозначают свойства объекта. Другие же функции, такие, как функция создания персонажа, ассоциативная, метафорическая, символическая, семиотическая и культурологическая, имеют более сложный характер. Их идентификация требует подключения фоновых знаний культурологического, социального и исторического плана.

Ключевые слова: *термины цвета, свойства цвета, цвет в психологии, символика цвета, цвет в художественных текстах, радикализация, Малая проза, функции цвета*

Сведения об авторе:

Панасенко Наталья Ивановна – доктор филологических наук, профессор Кафедры языковой коммуникации Университета Свв. Кирилла и Мефодия в Трнаве, Словакия. Сфера научных и профессиональных интересов – стилистика, лингвистика текста, когнитивная лингвистика, лингвопоэтика, лексикология, творческое письмо. E-mail: cindy777@mail.ru.

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