

NAMES OF COLOURS IN THE NOVELS OF MICHAŁ CHOROMAŃSKI

Summary

This book, which straddles the border between the fields of linguistics and literary history, is part of publications on the subject of colour in the work of authors of different genres and eras. The aim of this work is to conduct the most comprehensive linguistic analysis possible of the names of colours mentioned in the novels of Michał Choromański. The source material comprises all the names of colours mentioned in his 14 novels, which span two literary eras: the inter-war period and the post-war Polish People's Republic. In total, **944** separate names of colours were noted in **7658** examples taken from texts.

The lexical units extracted from the novels are categorised according to the concept of semantic meaning and ordered by frequency. This research took into consideration formal-semantic analysis of vocabulary with regard to its scope, relation to the contemporary reality and stylistic marking.

The names of colours analysed were restricted to those describing particular objects and focussed to a lesser extent on the metaphorical use of phrases (not taking set phrases into consideration, such as *see it down in black and white* (*czarno na białym*), *have no idea* (*nie mieć zielonego pojęcia*), *green border* (*zielona granica*), as such phrases do not contribute significant information on how the world the author presents is perceived through the colour spectrum). Lexemes were not analysed either, for instance, *dark*, *darken*, *darkened*, *light*, *lighten*, *lightened* (*ciemny*, *ciemnieć*, *pociemniały*, *jasny*, *jaśnieć*, *rozjaśniony*), as these are not typical names for colours. Nor were proper names analysed, such as *Gold Street*, *Sky Blue Lodge*, *the Road to White*, *Red Cross Sanatorium* (*ulica Złota*, *Błękitna Loża*, *Droga do Białego*, *Sanatorium Czerwonego Krzyża*). However, lexical units describing sensory phenomena were included (hearing, sight), for example, *silver-tongued* (*srebrny głos*), *the blueing of their gaze* (*spojrzenia niebieszczyły się*).

Uniform names were assigned to 12 groups – white, black, red, green, blue, yellow, brown, grey, violet, orange, silver and gold. Fields for multicoloured were also created.

This publication comprises two parts – a chapter devoted to semantic analysis and one on formal lexis for naming colours (*Linguistic analysis of the names of colours used in the novels of Michał Choromański*) and a chapter grouping material according to the realia described (*Colour scheme of the world presented in the novels of Michał Choromański*). The article also includes an *Introduction*, *Conclusion* and an *Appendix*.

The analysis of material confirms the hypothesis presented in the Introduction that colours play a significant role in the novels of Michał Choromański, which is in turn reflected on the linguistic level. Choromański knew the names of particular colours, even those regarded as rare or only used by specialists, and employed them skilfully in his texts.

Michał Choromański's work is varied in terms of time, subject matter and genre and his sensitivity to colour is noticeable. The colour schemes describing reality in his novels

are rich and diverse, and take into consideration primary colours and various shades or degrees of intensity. Furthermore, the function of naming colours also derives from other names: metals, minerals and gemstones, for example, *amber* (*bursztyn*), *emerald* (*szmaragd, szmaragdowy*), *garnet* (*granacik, granat*), *ivory* (*heban*), *jasper* (*jaspis*), *jasper-coloured* (*jaspisowy*), *lapis-lazuli*, *ruby* (*rubin*), *sapphire* (*szafir*), *topaz*; plants, such as: *beetroot* (*buraczany*), *cherry* (*wiśniowy*), *common lilac* (*bez*), *cornflower* (*chaber, bławatek*), *cornflower blue* (*chabrowy, bławatny*), *dandelion* (*mlecz*), *forget-me-not* (*niezapominajka*), *fuchsia* (*fuksja*), *lemon* (*cytrynowy*), *marsh marigold* (*kaczeniec*), *poppy* (*maki*), *raspberry* (*malinowy*), *rose* (*róże*), *roses* (*różany*), *sunflower* (*słoneczniki*), *tomato* (*pomidor*); and animals, for example, *canary* (*kanarkowy*), *horse-black* (*kary*), *horse-grey* (*siwek*), *mare-grey* (*siwosz*), *mousy* (*myszaty*), and *raven* (*kruczy*). There are also examples of more and less conventional periphrasis and comparative expressions, such as *redder than the crosses painted on the car windows*, *the colours of Michelangelo*, *resembling Javan batik*, *turn beetroot red* (*czerwieńszy od krzyżów namalowanych na szybach samochodu, kolory Michała Anioła, przypominający jawański batik, zaczerwienić się niczym boćwina*).

Perception of reality through the colour spectrum is characterised by a duality. This dichotomy is visible in the descriptions of urban spaces (rose-coloured buildings contrasting the greyness of the streets, fences, the sky, greyish amaranthine furnishings of the residence, white furniture with amaranthine upholstery), animals (rose-coloured cows against a grey background), clothing (yellow-and-blue ties of Ukrainian diplomats, the chessboard-like pattern of a black-and-white skirt). Such combinations of contrasting colours, which appear in almost each of his novel as a leitmotif, enable Choromański to create an atmosphere of unease and hallucinations.

It should be noted that the writer consciously used colourful descriptions, knew how they impact on each other, how they change when impacted on by lighting and the proximity of other colours. He knew their symbolism. In his stories the symbolism of colours is, with certain exceptions, commonly known and easily recognized by writers and readers alike.

Translated by Rob Pagett