

# THE ROLE OF THE WORD COLORS IN THE CREATION OF THE SYMBOLIC IMAGE OF THE FOREST IN THE SHORT NOVELBY: A. N. AND B. N. STRUGATSKY “THE SNAIL ON THE SLOPE”

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## Abstract

The article examines the role of the word colors in the creation of the symbolic image of the Forest in the short novel by A. N. and B. N. Strugatsky *The Snail on the Slope*. The authors believe that the prism of coloratives helps to make a meaningful analysis of the work and can be constructed including taking into account linguistic and extralinguistic factors. This methodological research principle allows the authors to consider the individual text as an integral literary system in which a relatively complete image of the world with the help of a color background is created and a certain aesthetic conception of the reflected reality is embodied. The paper gives the examples of how A. N. and B. N. Strugatsky expand the color semantics of green and yellow. In the description of the Forest, along with the traditional interpretation of the green in the Christian culture as “earthly” and meaning life, spring, the flowering of nature, other culturally marked connotations of this color are also reflected. The use of the same green color and its shades tearing away any interference into its world strengthens in the picture of the heroes’ world the fear of the unknown and unexplored, and “strange”. In conclusion, the authors note that the analysis of two lexical and semantic fields of green and yellow allows the researcher of the writers’ language to construct a kind of concept model that can be a special fragment of the individual linguistic image of the world. As a special feature being characteristic of the Strugatsky’s idiosyle the authors noticed the desire to penetrate into the most important problems of existence of man, to determine his place in this world, as well as a desire to help a person to make the right choice without losing himself in this world.

**Keywords:** coloratives, national-cultural symbolic content, A.N. and B.N. Strugatsky, “The Snail on the Slope”, Russian literature, the lexical-semantic field, the artistic space of the work

## 1 INTRODUCTION

It is known that the works by the brothers A.N. and B.N. Strugatsky traditionally belong to the socio-philosophical version of science fiction. According to the classification which is proposed by R.E. Telpovand which is one of the attempts of a

comprehensive linguistic and poetic characterization of the style of the prose of science fiction writers, the short novel "The Snail on the Slope" refers to the allegorical type in which all images and all scenes "exist as some expressers of implicit meanings and abstract ideas" [1]. And the subtext, interpretative functional plan, or "secondary reality" being present in any literary text, as noted by N.S. Valgin, is described through an external subject plan, for example, "a description of the landscape can only be a form for conveying the internal state of the author, the characters" [2]. In addition, the scholars also note that in the very nature of science fiction there lies the craving for cosmicality, the universality of generalizations, which finds expression through a clash of contradictions. The same struggle of contradictions between the real world and the fantastic world, wonderfully interwoven in the short novel "The Snail on the Slope", becomes a key one in the search for the meaning of life of the main characters of the work: clever and intelligent philologist Perets and biologist Candide, an internally free, independent of the bureaucratic system of the office. However, despite the characters' seeming loneliness, the attempts of each are to differently resist the anti-moral (from their point of view) progress, and the inexorable actions of the laws of nature, nevertheless they have the same priorities. The fact is that, once in a world being alien and incomprehensible to them, both characters try to make sense of it, make it their own, at that understanding and preserving their "Selves". At the same time, having discovered that the world in which they have to live is impenetrable and imperfect, both characters retreat from their hopes to know it, preferring to return to the obscure and equally unknown mysterious past with its imperfection and cruelty. And this ambivalence, in our opinion, is created by means of language, because, as notes N.S. Valgina, "associative relations dominate in the literary text" in view of the fact that "different perceptions of the same realities of the objective world can be associated by the artists with different words. In this case, "the artistic word is practically conceptually inexhaustible." [2].

At the same time, we note that the units that convey nationally specific information in a concentrated form are distinguished together with all the units in a language that reflect the culture and mentality of the people. Such units comprehend color-designating lexis, in particular, coloratives, in which both the universal and idio-ethnic features of language and culture are reflected.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to determine the role of colorative vocabulary in the creation of the idiostyle of the short novel by A.N. and B.N. Strugatsky "The Snail on the Slope", as well as to establish a connection between the coloratives as the language units and the components of the literary world of the Strugatsky brothers. In addition, the concept of the proposed investigation was influenced by the desire to highlight and see in the structure of the analyzed work the most significant symbolic image – the image of the Forest – and to determine its place in the system of authors' coordinates.

## 2 METHODS

So, in this work, the object of the description was the colorative vocabulary in the short novel by A.N. and B.N. Strugatsky "The Snail on the Slope". The idea of an approach to the text of the story through the prism of coloratives is that the semantic analysis of the work can be based on linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Such a methodological research principle, in our opinion, allows us to analyze a particular text as an integral

literary system in which, in particular, using a color background, a relatively complete image of the world is created and a certain aesthetic concept of the reflected reality is embodied (for a comprehensive approach to a work of fiction, see e.g. [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9]).

In our opinion, relying on the body of thought-out selected fragments of the text of the short novel containing various coloratives, it is possible to illustrate the powerful force of figurativeness, which is in the demonstration of changes of the conditions for using the same color or group of colors throughout the text, for example, color can have a variety of connotations, and then one and the same color will acquire intratext polysemy. In support of the foregoing, we can cite, in particular, the observations by A.S. Vyrodova on the peculiarities of the color talent of F. Dostoevsky and A. Platonov, indicating how meager the use of color in a fictitious text can be. Thus, the author's individual vision of coloratives is associated, inter alia, with the authors' idiosyncrasy and idiolect, "in which the author's individual "Self" is first and foremost reflected [10].

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A set of words with a common integral sense "color" is called colorisms (or coloratives). They are used to designate what is typical in the understanding of the color-light spectrum by a specific society or the majority of this society. Consequently, the interest in color naming is determined by the vital needs of the people, for "the numerous colors, their names and the symbolic meanings are a distinctive reflection of the multiplicity of the world for any people. In addition, it is known that practically all major things in life of society and the elements of nature being important for a person - fire, grass, sky, sun - are associated with certain colors." [11].

Not unknown is the fact that any imaginative writing has its own "color background". This background is created by a system of color associations, determined by both the world picture of the native speaker and a whole complex of linguistic and extralinguistic features of the subject of speech (creativity, nationality, level of culture, worldview), "because color is deeply embedded in cultural traditions and is biologically connected with the psychogenetic code of each person" [12]. At the same time, the research task consists in decoding the language layer of the literary work - a color one, encrypted by the author, since this layer not only indicates a penmanship, psychomotor performance, but also helps reveal the inner meaning of the work, penetrate into the poetic world of the author. The writer is like a carrier of a certain type of thinking that "creates its own fictitious color model of the world where his aesthetic position is reflected" [12].

Note that in modern science of coloristics, there is a clear division of color designations into two groups - "primary (absolute) and tone colors. Absolute color names, in turn, are divided into chromatic, designating seven colors of the rainbow spectrum (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, dark blue, violet), and achromatic (black, white, grey)" [13, 14].

The dominant color lexical-semantic fields (LSP) in the short novel "The Snail on the Slope" are the four main chromatic ones - *green, violet, yellow* and *red*, the achromatic ones that are included in this LSP - *white, black, grey*. At the same time, it is interesting to trace the use of *green* and *yellow* by the authors in the dynamics of events enveloping in the work.

Despite the fact that in the short novel “The Snail on the Slope” there is no central character and a certain spatio-temporal location, however, the main ones are, on the one hand, each living his own life and having a desire to comprehend the Forest, original characters of the work Candide and Perets, on the other hand– the Forest as an embodiment of the very Future, so alien to man by virtue of the fact that he does not still live in it.

So, in the author’s image of the Forest, the *green* color and its tones prevail.

On the one hand, the text contains the description of the Forest where *green* is associated with “earthly” in traditional Christian culture and denotes life, spring, florescence of nature [15]. For example, we see the following fragments of reality with the eyes of the characters:

«...**Зелёное** пахучее изобилие. Изобилие красок, изобилие запахов. Изобилие жизни. И всё чужое» (АБС). (... **Green** odorous abundance. Abundance of colors, abundance of odors. Abundance of life. And everything is strange). And further:

«**Зелёные** горячие болота, нервные пугливые деревья, русалки, отдыхающие на воде под луной от своей таинственной деятельности в глубинах, осторожные непонятные аборигены, пустые деревни» [АБС]. (**Green** thermal swamps, nervous shy trees, mermaids having the refreshment on the surface of water under the moonlight of their mysterious activities in the depths, cautious obscure aborigines, empty villages).

On the other hand, we find other culturally marked connotations of this color in the short novel by the Strugatsky brothers. So, the same *green* and its tones create the image of the unfathomable Forest. And while the characters are trying to learn this Forest wrapped in a shroud of mystery, it lives its life being incomprehensible to any of the characters, and therefore their attempts are futile. The use of *green* and its tones, for example, in the description of a forest swamp, rejecting any interference in its world, intensifies this fear of the unknown and the unfathomed, and the alien. This semantic contrast is emphasized by the noun *greenth* that is comprehended in the common field with the adjective *green* and tone colorative with the formant that designates the name of the combination of mixed tones of the colors of *yellow-green* in the same context, for example,

«Что делается на болотах, с дороги увидеть было трудно: из плотного переплетения древесных крон над головой свешивались и уходили в топь торопливыми корнями мириады толстых **зелёных колонн, канатов**, зыбких, как паутина, нитей – **жадная наглая зелень** стояла стеной, похожей на туман, скрывала все, кроме звуков и запахов. Время от времени в **жёлто-зелёном сумраке** что-то обрывалось и с протяжным шумом падало, раздавался густой жирный всплеск, болото вздыхало, урчало, чавкало, и снова наступала тишина, а минуту спустя сквозь **зелёную завесу** на дорогу выбиралась утробная вонь потревоженной бездны» [АБС]. (What is being done in the swamps, it was difficult to see from the road: from a dense interweaving of tree crowns over my head, myriads of thick **green columns, ropes**, unsteady as cobwebs, ropes hung from hastily rooted in harsh roots – **greedy impudent greenth** stood as a fog-like wall, hid everything except sounds and smells. From time to time, something broke off in the **yellow-green twilight** and fell with a lingering noise, there was a thick greasy splash, the swamp sighed, rumbled, champed, and silence again, and a minute later through **the green veil** the ugly stench of the disturbed abyss climbed out onto the road).

The writers harmoniously weave the complex color terms with the attitudinal formative “*shrilly*” into the contexture of the story, for example,

«Здравствуй, Перчик, – говорил он. – Давно я тебя не видел. Как ты тут? А я вот опять привез, что ты будешь делать... В самый разнаипоследнейший. – Он развернул бумагу и показал Перецу букетик **ядовито-зелёных** лесных цветов. – А пахнут-то как! Пахнут!» [АБС]. (Hello, Perchik,” he said. “I have not seen you for a long time.” How are you here? And here I am again brought what you are going to do ... In the most different and the latest. – He unfolded the paper and showed to Perets a bunch of **shrilly green** forest flowers. –How sweetsmellingthey are! Sweetsmelling!).

As we see, depicting a swamp, where “жаднаянаглаязелень” (greedy impudent greenth) stood as a wall, the authors emphasize its symbolism: it symbolizes hopelessness, time dragging, stagnation, the invariableness of the system and the impossibility of change. Meanwhile, the Forest from afar, like the Future, beckons the characters with its *greenth* as the prospect of a brighter future (let’s recall the familiar “Апахнут-токак! Пахнут!”/How sweet smelling they are! Sweet smelling!), the hope for development, but, having approached the coveted Forest, they see through the thicket that there is no uniformity in this greenth. So, in the description of the *green* Forest and what surrounds it, the spots of *yellow* and its tones appear, reflecting the destructive process that occurs in the very Forest. And then it, being attractive from afar, suddenly turns out to be intimidating by virtue of the fact that in essence it has not been cognized and therefore understood. For example,

«Кандид опять отвлёкся. Медленно покачиваясь, проплывали по сторонам **жёлто-зелёные** заросли, кто-то сопел и вздыхал в воде, с тонким воем пронесся рой мягких белёсых жуков, из которых делают хмельные настойки, дорога под ногами то становилась мягкой от высокой травы, то **жёсткой** от щебня и крошеного камня. **Жёлтые**, серые, **зелёные** пятна - взгляду не за что было зацепиться, и нечего было запоминать. Потом тропа круто свернула влево, Кандид прошел ещё несколько шагов и, вздрогнув, остановился» [АБС] (Candide was distracted again. Slowly swaying, **yellow-green** bushes were floating along the sides, someone was sniffing and sighing in the water, a swarm of soft whitish bugs from which they make hoppy tinctures swept with a thin howl, the road underfoot became soft from tall grass, then hard from rubble and crushed stone. **Yellow**, grey, **green** spots – there was nothing to capture, and there was nothing to remember. Then the path turned sharply to the left, Candide walked a few more steps and, with a starting, stopped).

In addition, the *yellow* color also reflects decay, the lifelessness of what previously drew the characters of the story in that same Forest, for example,

«У дороги, головой в болоте, лежал большой мертвяк. Руки и ноги его были растопырены и неприятно вывернуты, и он был совершенно неподвижен. Он лежал на смятой, **пожелтевшей** от жары траве, бледный, широкий, и даже издали было видно, как страшно его били. Он был как студень» [АБС]. By the road there lay a large carrion, its head in a swamp. Its arms and legs were spread wide and unpleasantly twisted, and it was completely motionless. It was on the crumpled grass, which had **turned yellow** from heat, pale, wide, and even from afar it was visible how terribly it was beaten. It was like jellied meat)

#### 4 SUMMARY

Thus, we dare hope that even such a preliminary review of the two lexical-semantic fields of *green* and *yellow* will allow the researcher of the writer’s language to construct a kind of model that can act as a special fragment of the individual linguistic

view of the world of writers. Whereas the intuitive artistic selection of color epithets allows us to see a certain aesthetic concept of the reflected reality.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

So, as noted in critical publications, the novel “The Snail on the Slope”, “more than any of the Strugatsky’s books, calls us to understand that in the world there are values alien to us that form the basis of other people’s lives. And in this regard, we can highlight a special feature inherent in the idiosyncrasy of the brothers A. N and B.N. Strugatsky, - the desire to penetrate into the most important problems of existence of man, to determine his place in this world, as well as the desire to help a person make the right choice and not have lost his selfhood in this world.

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