



A STUDY OF THE TEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRISMATIC COGNITION AND AESTHETICS IN THE LYRICAL VOICES OF THE WELL-KNOWN ENGLISH AUTHORS

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Abstract

Chromatic or prismatic cognition is a key part of human psychology and behavior affecting many aspects of mind, including basic vision, scene perception, object recognition, aesthetics formation, and communication. In literary writings, color symbolism is specifically accomplished by attaching an emotional state or event or even character to a color. For example, blue is often described as peaceful, tranquil, and secure. Also, it is associated with open spaces, freedom, and intuition. Similarly, green in nature can subconsciously reassure people of hopes and productivity. The loss of proper colour cognition in one's surrounding leads to pessimistic, unfriendly, poor thoughts and actions. The blueness of rivers and oceans have long been a potent symbol in literature and art, evoking a wide range of feelings and ideas, from the sublime to the tragic. In this light, the paper aims at presenting the critical perspectives of chromatic or prismatic cognition in the poems some of the well-known poets in the English world foregrounding blue, green, red, yellow, black and polychromatic cognition. It includes the interpretation of the poems like "Enigmas" by Pablo Neruda, "A Summer Day by the Sea" by H.W. Longfellow, "After the Sea-Ship" by Walt Whitman, "Once by the Pacific" and "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost, "Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas, "And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time" and "Little Black Boy" by William Blake, William Wordsworth's "A Whirl-Blast from behind the Hill," and "Daffodils," John Hopkin's "Heaven- Haven: A Nun Takes the Veil", Robert Burns' "A Red, Red Rose," "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams, Claude Mackay's "A Red Flower Poem," Oscar Wilde's "Symphony in Yellow," Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," Wallace Stevens' "Disillusionment at 10 O'clock" and "I Can Sing a Rainbow" by Arthur Hamilton. The in-depth focus on the colour components and contexts in these poems not only determines the relationship between thought and the thematic discourse but also heighten the ecosophical dimensions and psychic disposition with which the creative and aesthetic notions of the poets turn to become colourful.

Keywords

Prismatic cognition, Colour symbolism, Thematic discourse, Aesthetics, Ecosophical, Psychic disposition, etc.

Full Article

1. Introduction:

Colour cognition determines the discourse in a text that refers to a shared way for people to understand the world around them. Emphasizing on colour, right from the nursery classes, we are introduced to very popular rhymes like "Baa baa black ship/ Have you any wool?" or the colour song like: "Orange is carrot/ Yellow is pear/ Green is grass/ Brown is the bear/Purple is a plum/ Blue is the sky/ Black is the witch's hat/ And red is cherry pie." This colour consciousness adds to



the charm of understanding a writing that both the teachers and students enjoy, and it creates an image and a jovial feeling of the reader.

What we perceive normally from literary writings is that a writer's use of color in a work of literature is intentional, but meaningful and spontaneous. If we look at the literatures across the world, normally, black represents death, evil, grief, and depression as it is in Gothic literature. Writers use blue to represent serenity and tranquility, instilling a scene with a calming effect. It can also signify sadness, melancholy, or isolation. Brown means warmth, earthy brown color may symbolize dependability, comfort, and a sense of being grounded. Green symbolizes rebirth, growth, peace, jealousy, greed, spring and renewal. Orange represents energy, excitement, joy, and creativity. Since orange is the color of fire, it may also symbolize heat. Pink symbolizes love, kindness, femininity, innocence, and playfulness, whereas purple is associated with royalty, bravery, spirituality, and luxury. Red symbolizes some of the most powerful human emotions, like passionate love or lust. On the other side of the spectrum, this warm color is also the color of blood, often symbolizing anger, danger, and violence. White is the primary color traditionally symbolizes innocence, peace, and cleanliness. It also represents purity and virginity, while it symbolizes mourning in some East Asian cultures. Yellow symbolizes creativity, happiness, optimism, and warmth—think of a yellow ray of sunlight poking out from a dark cloud. A common negative connotation of the color yellow is cowardice, popularized by the phrase “yellow-bellied.”

Use of colour forms an understanding basically through language. This helps us interpret the world around us. This can be also be focused under environmental cognition linking to socio-cultural aspects with regard to environmental issues. In this context, contemporary studies in the environmental humanities (also ecological humanities) include studies relating to blue and green humanities as well.

2. Blue Cognition in Poetry:

As a subgenre of environmental cognition, blue cognition can be a relevant study in an era of climate change, raising sea levels, and the disappearance of oceanic biodiversity. This explores art, literature, culture, and history through the lens of rivers, waterfalls, and ocean. A broad area of its study titled Blue Humanities is a call to action for all humanity to think beyond the artificial boundaries that separate land and water and to acknowledge our mutual dependence and responsibility to safeguard our water bodies.

Virtually, we have seen how the poets of the 19th and 20th century achieve greater philosophical and moral height through their excellent artistic depiction of water. It can be symbolized as a life-giving force and a threat as well. One such poem is “A Summer Day by the Sea” by H.W. Longfellow (1807-1892) that depicts a coastal sunset, capturing the transition from day to night. The use of “ashen gray and gold” evokes a sense of both tranquility and impending darkness. The lighthouse beams resemble streetlights guiding ships, while the stars adorn the darkening sky. The sea remains as a means to express human emotions. The sunrise, the sunset that glow with amber colour and the blue waves make us feel something which is immeasurable. The poet says with emotional outburst that:

“The sun is set; and in his latest beams
Yon little cloud of ashen gray and gold,
Slowly upon the amber air unrolled,” (*A Summer Day by the Sea*, Lines 1-3)

The poem creates a rhythmic flow that mirrors the changing light. The shift from the joyous day to the “land of dreams” suggests a bittersweet sense of transition.



The concluding stanza highlights the contrasting emotions the day evokes: joy and pain, life and loss. It implies that the summer day's beauty can both commemorate the past and inspire hope for the future. The scenic beauty on the coast of the sea is unparalleled. The horizon, the sunrise, the merger of the sea with the sky, the of animals inside sea water and birds in the sky make the ambience full of joy. These feelings are aptly presented by suitable colours.

“O summer day beside the joyous sea!
O summer day so wonderful and white,
So full of gladness and so full of pain!” (*A Summer Day by the Sea*, Lines 9-11)

Contextually, this poem reflects the Romantic era's fascination with nature's colourful beauty and its capacity to stir emotions.

Pablo Neruda (1904- 1973) whose “Enigmas” (Tr. by Robert Bly) explores the mysteries of the ocean and the limitations of human knowledge. The speaker is confronted with a series of questions about various marine creatures and phenomena, and he responds by emphasizing the vastness and incomprehensibility of the ocean. He says:

“You've asked me what the lobster is weaving there with
his golden feet?
I reply, the ocean knows this.” (“Enigmas,” Lines 1-3)

The poem is characterized by a series of short, question-and-answer exchanges. The speaker is asked questions about the lobster, ascidia, Macrocytis alga, narwhal, kingfisher, sea anemone, and ocean spines. In each case, he replies with a brief answer that highlights the creature's mystery and the ocean's vastness. The ocean is described as a place of “endless” life and “pure” beauty, but it is also a place of darkness and mystery. The speaker's net is a symbol of human knowledge, which is limited and inadequate to capture the full complexity of the ocean.

“I want to tell you the ocean knows this, that life in its
jewel boxes
is endless as the sand, impossible to count, pure,
and among the blood-colored grapes time has made the
petal hard and shiny,” (*Enigmas*, Lines 20-24)

The poem explores the relationship between humans and the natural world. It is a reminder that there are still many mysteries to be discovered, and that human knowledge is always limited. “After the Sea-Ship” by Walt Whitman (1819-1892) captures the dynamic movement of blue waves after a ship passes. The “white-gray sails” create a romantic notion as the ship passes.

“After the Sea-Ship--after the whistling winds;
After the white-gray sails, taut to their spars and ropes,
Below, a myriad, myriad waves, hastening, lifting up their necks,” (*After the Sea-Ship*, Lines 1-3)

Both the sea and the ship work as metaphors of time and human life. The presence of white in the vast blue ocean leads to a feeling of infinite possibilities. Compared to Whitman's earlier works, this poem exhibits a shift towards a more concise and focused treatment of nature.

In ‘Water,’ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) taps into themes of human life, the natural elements, and flourishing/failing life. Water is the elixir of life. It can give life and many more beautiful things associated with nature. At the same time, it can give us the glimpse of destruction



in different violent forms. Since, it gives us life, it is considered the creator of life, a power to transform life as well.

“Ill-used, it will destroy,
In perfect time and measure
With a face of golden pleasure
Elegantly destroy.” (*Water*, Lines 8-11)

The poem's tone is direct and clear as the speaker lays out the different instincts and abilities of water. He openly discusses the nature of life and the potential for destruction inherent in all living things.

Once by the Pacific by Robert Frost (1874-1963) captures the ominous atmosphere of an impending storm by the Pacific Ocean. The crashing waves, likened to soldiers, prepare for an assault on the shore, while the low clouds resembling locks of hair suggest anticipation and a sense of foreboding. It seems as if the poet is able to discover the miraculous equation of the blue elements of the earth as the sea waves touch the land quite impressively as the clouds come down to join the sport of a possible storm.

“The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in,” (*Once by the Pacific*, Lines 1-6)

The elevated perspective of the cliff, backed by the continent, conveys a sense of vulnerability and alludes to the cyclical nature of destruction and renewal. The dark imagery anticipates a "night of dark intent," extending beyond a mere storm to suggest an age of conflict and upheaval.

“The cliff in being backed by continent;
It looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.” (*Once by the Pacific*, Lines 7-14)

Compared to Frost's other works, this poem exhibits a departure from pastoral themes and explores the themes of nature's destructive power and human fragility. It reflects the anxieties of the time period, marked by economic depression and the looming threat of war.

Poems like *The Waterfall and the Eglantine* by William Wordsworth, *The Brook* by A.L. Tennyson, *The Sea* by James Reeves, *Rain* by Edward Thomas speak of the emotions attached to water that is blue cognition of the poets.

3. Green Cognition in Poetry:

Green cognition explores the relationship between humans, the environment, and the arts, philosophy, and literature. It includes the study of how literature represents nature and the natural world, and how these representations are generated by cultures. Green cognition also considers how storytelling can inspire a deeper connection with nature and environmental stewardship. Some prominent green writers include William Wordsworth, John Keats, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, James Fennimore Cooper, George Orwell, and Margaret Atwood.

Fern Hill by Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) *Fern Hill* captures the idyllic childhood experiences of the speaker, evoking a sense of wonder and innocence. The vivid imagery and rich language create a nostalgic and immersive experience, transporting the reader to the speaker's idyllic past.

“Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,



The night above the dingle starry,
Time let me hail and climb” (“Fern Hill,” Lines 1-4)

Experiencing morning to night amidst the green leaves, fruits and flowers is an extraordinary cognition of the poet, that one would think himself as the prince of the land of the beautiful gifts of nature.

“Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns” (*Fern Hill*, Lines 5-6)

The poem is characterized by its use of sensory details, conveying the lushness of nature through the "lilt of the house," the "green of the grass," and the "golden" hues of time. The speaker's connection to nature is palpable, as they are "prince" of the apple towns and "hunter" among the calves. It still embodies his fascination with childhood and the passage of time.

“And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder:

xxx xxx xxx xxx

Out of the whinnying green stable
On to the fields of praise.” (*Fern Hill*, Lines 29- 37)

The poem reflects the era in which it was written, as it depicts a rural and idyllic setting that was rapidly disappearing due to industrialization and urbanization. It captures a sense of loss and nostalgia for a simpler time.

“Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.”(*Fern Hill*, Lines 57- 61)

The thought of greenness designs his cognition as he glorifies his sense of getting associated with nature. Both time and nature hold him with greenness around which helps him develop a creative impulse of regeneration and rejuvenation. *And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time* by William Blake (1757-1827) is often assumed that the poem was inspired by the apocryphal story that a young Jesus, accompanied by Joseph of Arimathea, a tin merchant, travelled to what is now England and visited Glastonbury during his unknown years.

“And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains **green**? (Lines 1-2)

xxx xxx xxx

And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these **dark** satanic mills?” (*And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time*, Lines 7-8)

The poet gives a high estimation of the spiritual journey of Jesus Christ in the lap of nature that becomes enchanting due to their colour cognition.

William Wordsworth’s “A Whirl-Blast from behind the Hill” uses nature as a vehicle for exploring a moment of imaginative wonder. The sudden hailstorm, with its startling sound, creates a momentary disruption in the tranquility of the forest. The speaker seeks shelter beneath a dense green canopy of hollies, where the contrast between the green foliage and the white hailstones becomes a source of wonder.



“Of tallest hollies, tall and green;
A fairer bower was never seen.

xxx xxx xxx

And all the year the bower is green.
But see! where'er the hailstones drop
The withered leaves all skip and hop;” (*A Whirl-Blast from behind the Hill*, Lines 3-4,
7-9)

The poet talks of the evergreen trees adding to beauty of both mind and nature. The green leaves develop resistance to encounter seasonal disasters as they skip and hop the fall of hailstones on them. After all, they endeavor to remain fresh and fine and shine again. It reflects the romantic fascination with the natural world and the power of the imagination to transform ordinary experiences into moments of wonder.

Heaven-Haven: A Nun Takes the Veil by G. M. Hopkins (1844-1889), the speaker seeks sanctuary within a metaphorical haven, where eternal spring and tranquility prevail. The poem reflects the author's preoccupation with nature and spirituality, as seen in his other works such as *God's Grandeur* and *The Windhover*. The *sharp and sided hail* and *green swell* of the sea represent the harshness and instability of the outside world, while "fields" and "lilies" evoke a realm of peace and beauty. The haven is described in negative terms, as a place "where no storms come" and "out of the swing of the sea," highlighting the nun's desire to withdraw from the chaos and uncertainty of life.

“And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.” (*Heaven-Haven: A Nun Takes the Veil*, Lines 5-8)

The poem goes beyond mere escapism by suggesting that the speaker's search for refuge is a spiritual one, a longing for connection with the divine.

4. Red Cognition in Poetry:

Red has historically been associated with sacrifice, danger, and courage. In some way, it is associated with heat, activity, passion, sexuality, anger, love, and joy. In other contexts, it is the color symbolizing happiness and good fortune too.

Robert Burns' *A Red, Red Rose* is a ballad that explores themes of love, change, beauty, youth, and aging. The poem compares the speaker's love to a rose and suggests that true love is both constantly renewing and unchangeable.

“O my Luve's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve's like the melody
That's sweetly play'd in tune.” (*A Red, Red Rose*, Stanza-1)

The reference to red rose as a metaphor makes the poem universally understood in a meaningful way. The cognition with red colour flower indeed needs no further explanation.

William Carlos Williams' *The Red Wheelbarrow* is considered a prominent work of the Imagist movement. The poem's line "so much depends upon a red wheelbarrow, glazed with rain, water, beside the white chickens" leaves the reader to interpret what exactly depends on the wheelbarrow.

“so much depends



upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens.” (*The Red Wheelbarrow*)

The presentation of both red and white colours forms pessimistic and sportive activities in the mutually dependent amidst downpour.

A *Red Flower Poem* by Claude McKay employs vivid imagery and sensual language to explore themes of desire, beauty, and the secrets of the heart.

“Your lips are like a southern lily red,
Wet with the soft rain-kisses of the night,
In which the brown bee buries deep its head,
When still the dawn's a silver sea of light.” (*A Red Flower Poem*, Lines 1-4)

He says that the lips of his beloved “betray the secret of your soul”, the “symbol of a dream,” and thus turns to be thought-provoking. The comparison of the beloved's lips to a lily blooming at dawn captures the transience of both nature and human emotion.

5. Yellow Cognition in Poetry:

The shade yellow is, apparently, a joyous and an intellectual colour. The term yellow in the context of ‘Catcher in the Rye’ means cowardly because Holden pretends to be tough but is scared of violence. He says, ‘I’m one of these very yellow guys to confess that he is not a confrontational person.’ His gloves were stolen and even if he knew who took them, he wouldn't fight for them. He ruminated over his inability to throw a punch and concedes, “It's no fun to be yellow” because he seems to believe that masculinity and aggression are inextricably linked.

William Wordsworth in much anthologized poem “Daffodils” speak of the yellow colour wild flower and makes the readers feel the presence of life and beauty in the freshness of the colour of the host of flower.

“When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;” (*Daffodils*, Lines 3-4)

These “golden daffodils” makes his dance for joy and help develop a natural spirit.

Oscar Wilde's *Symphony in Yellow* captures the visual beauty of an urban landscape using the repeated motif of the color yellow. The images of the omnibus, barges, and fog evoke a sense of movement and atmosphere, while the comparison to natural elements, such as butterflies and jade, adds a touch of whimsy.

“An omnibus across the bridge
Crawls like a yellow butterfly,
xx xx xx xx xx
Big barges full of yellow hay
Are moored against the shadowy wharf,
And, like a yellow silken scarf,
The thick fog hangs along the quay.” (*Symphony in Yellow*, Lines 1-2, & 5-8)



The golden outlook of the poet yields a sense of blazoning romantic notion which is always fresh and fine. Although the colours of shedding leaves are yellow, still then it nurtures the brightened imagination.

“The yellow leaves begin to fade
And flutter from the Temple elms....” (*Symphony in Yellow*, Lines 10-11)

The poem's focus on the ephemeral nature of beauty which is reminiscent of the aesthetic movement, prevalent during the Victorian era.

6. Black Cognition in Poetry:

Black is a colour much used in gothic literature to symbolize evil, death, power, mystery and fear. Black also has negative connotations, especially in poetry, and when combined with red or orange can create a highly aggressive colour scheme. “The Little Black Boy” by William Blake, includes the lines:

“And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.” (*The Little Black Boy*, Lines 2-4)

The colour consciousness changes the perception of the reader regarding the personality of the black people for the simple reason that Blake presented the colours in a philosophical way. Similarly, Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Raven” makes use of a blackbird to symbolize death. “Black is Beautiful” by Shannon D. Brown-Rogers expresses love for the color of one's skin and uses similes to create a piece that speaks to happy memories.

7. Polychromatic Cognition in Poetry:

“I Can Sing a Rainbow” by Arthur Hamilton is one of the most popular songs for decades together attracting towards colour musically. The song says:

“Red and yellow and pink and green
Purple and orange and blue,
I can sing a rainbow.”

The rainbow remains a multi-coloured attraction and a natural gift of unfathomable beauty. Its colour combinations show us the manifestations of the aesthetic of nature in the midst of rain and sunshine.

Robert Frost’s *Nothing Gold Can Stay* is about the fleeting nature of beauty, youth, and life itself. According to the poem, nothing “gold”—essentially nothing pure, precious, or beautiful—can last forever. The poem begins by focusing on changes in the natural world. The “first green” leaves of spring are compared to gold, nature’s most prized metal, immediately establishing gold as symbolic of everything that is fresh, youthful, and beautiful. Yet this “hue” is also the “hardest” for nature, personified in the poem as a female figure, “to hold.” Nature is trying to stop the freshness of early spring from fading, perhaps like a mother who wishes her children would stay young forever.

“Nature’s first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.” (*Nothing Gold Can Stay*, Lines 1-2)



Taken literally, "gold" refers to the fact that spring leaves are indeed often a lighter, brighter color than the darker foliage of summer. In fact, new buds on trees are often a very pale green or yellow in color. But "gold" is also symbolic here. Gold is, of course, a precious metal, associated with wealth, beauty, and perhaps purity. Through this metaphor, then, the speaker is saying that the fresh buds of spring are beautiful and valuable.

Wallace Stevens' "Disillusionment of Ten o' Clock" begins with the speaker stating that he can see a number of houses that are "haunted / By white night-gowns." The residents of these houses, whether they make up a street or a town, are boring. They all wear the same thing to bed. Their clothes stand is a large metaphor for the state of their lives. The speaker sees them as living nowhere close to their full potential.

"The houses are haunted
By white night-gowns.
None are green,
Or purple with green rings,
Or green with yellow rings,
Or yellow with blue rings.

XX XX XX XX XX

Catches tigers

In red weather." (*Disillusionment of Ten o' Clock*, Lines 1-6, 13-14)

He goes on to list out all of the different colors that the nightgowns could be, but aren't. They might be green or even "yellow with blue rings." In the next sections, he goes on to explain how a boring life leads to boring dreams. There is one contingent of the population that doesn't live as straightforwardly—the sailors. They too sleep but they dream of chasing tigers. Their lives are different enough to supply them with some interest, at least when they're sleeping.

8. Critical Discussion and Conclusion:

Poets are no strangers to color symbolism, colour binarism and polychromatic representations. The critical focus thus gives an idea that poets rejoice in the midst of colours. The celebration of love of Robert Burns heralds the glory of colours. William Blake gives a spiritual glimpse of Jesus Christ's green adventure. He also expresses his tender feelings towards the innocence of a black boy that implies black is beautiful. William Wordsworth's unparalleled piercing into the heart and soul of greenness makes him immortal. His love for yellow flowers is yet an experience of joyous wonder. The well-known American poets such as Walt Whitman present sea and ship as metaphors of time and life. Robert Frost broods over the ominous atmosphere of the impending storm whereas his "Nature's green is gold" is a very popular line which refers to purity of nature. When R.W. Emerson transcends the colour of water, H.W. Longfellow takes the route of blue sea to express his poetic emotions. John Hopkin's creative faculty is preoccupied with nature's colour because they help prevail peace and beauty. Dyla Thomas' sensory details convey the lushness of nature leading to nostalgia as it disappears due to rapid industrialization and urbanization. William Carlos Williams' colourful thoughts envisage sustenance in the lap of nature. Poets like Oscar Wilde talk of visual beauty of coloured perception whereas Claude Mackay imaginative reflections on a red lily capture the lovable insights of the poet. It may be hydrocritical scholarship or environmental humanities, the colours and their combinations have been a potential source of profound poetic imagination. It is pertinent enough to say that no authors are complete in their respective writings without colours. Although a handful of poets have been quoted here, there are scores of poets across the world deriving varieties of poetic cognition owing to colours. Many of the postmodern poets lament the loss of charming and fresh colours of the pastoral and



countryside settings; the colour of birds and animals; and the seasonal colours leading to loss of ecocognition. Colour reflected in the poems result in psychic dispositions and rhetorical expressions of emotions.

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Article Received: 11/04/2025

Article Accepted: 22/04/2025

Published Online: 25/06/2025



**Literary Cognizance: An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism**
Vol. – VI, Issue-1, June 2025

*To Cite the Article: Dash, Pratap. “A Study of the Textual Relationship between Prismatic Cognition and Aesthetics in the Lyrical Voices of the Well-Known English Authors” *Literary Cognizance: An International Refereed/Peer Reviewed e-Journal of English Language, Literature and Criticism*, Vol.- VI, Issue- 1, June, 2025, 37-47. www.literarycognizance.com*

