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Linguistic Relativity and Fictional Culture of Dystopia

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The dystopian world created by Jasper Fforde in *Shades of Grey: The Road to High Saffron*

- ⇒ **Text-world** is a conceptual space, created by the addresser and the addressee, who interact with the text (Gavins 20), it includes; actions, events, arguments, and any statements about the entities that inhabit the text world. Analysis of propositions through reference to linguistic signs can provide rich material regarding the architectonics of text worlds (Gavins 59–61).
- ⇒ **The principle of minimal departure.** The assumption that the world formed by verbal means is identical to the one we live in, until they are presented with information that contradicts it (Gavins 12).

Theory of Linguistic Relativity (based on Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis)

2 approaches to create the language of dystopia (Beauchamp)

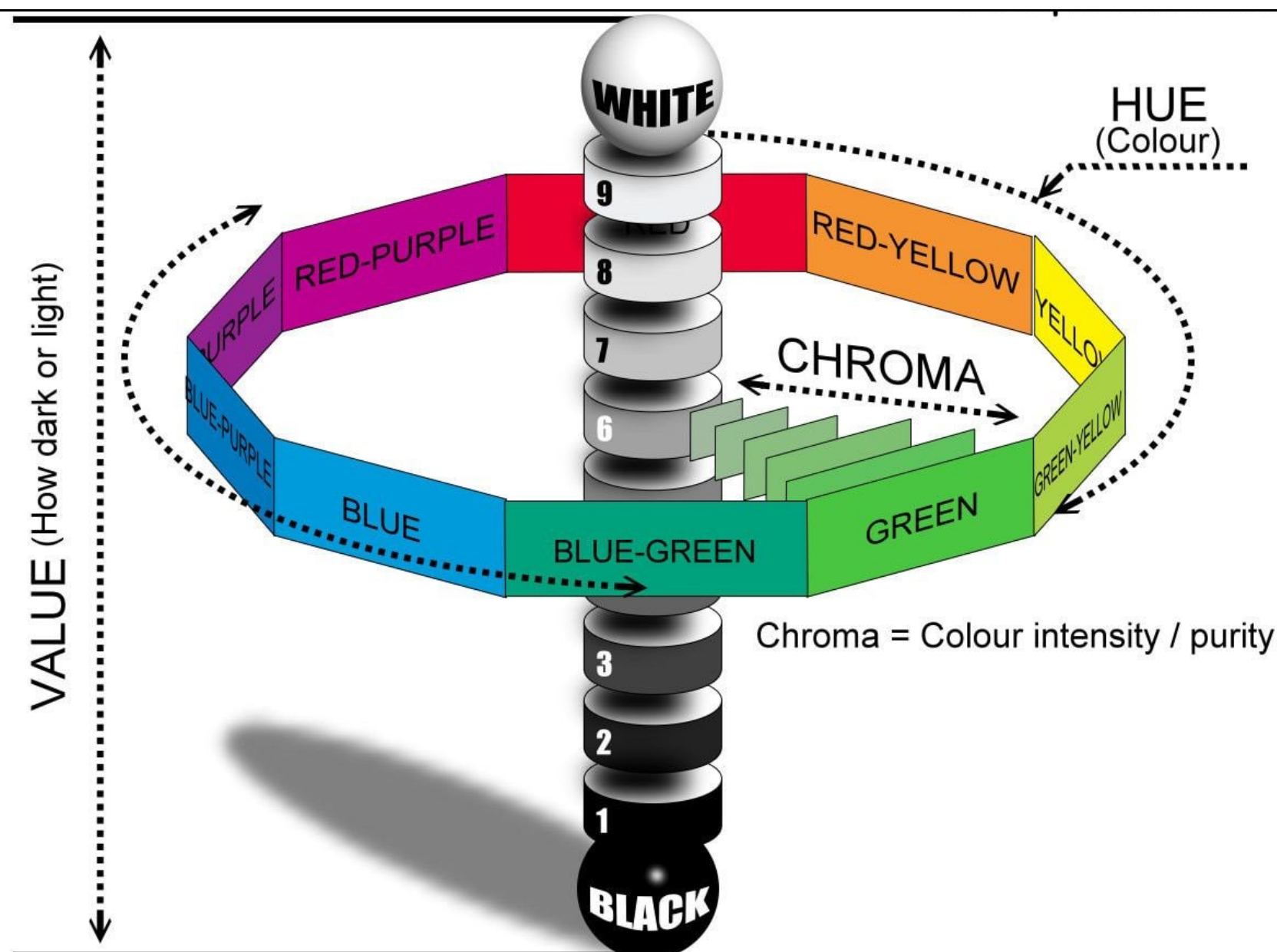
"Orwellian"

"brand new" language full of neologisms that create the stultifying effect
e.g. 'Newspeak', 'crimestop'

"Zamyatin's"

fictional world is created by already existing words but in new combinations and contexts
e.g. 'бесконечное уравнение Вселенной'

Actual world	Fictional text-world
<p>Albert H. Munsell (1858–1918) was an American painter, teacher of art, and the inventor of the Munsell colour system.</p> <p>Munsell colour system is a method of designating colours based on a colour arrangement scheme.</p>	<p>Munsell</p> <p>"<u>The Word of Munsell was the Rules</u>, and <u>the Rules were the Word of Munsell</u>. They regulated everything we did, and had brought peace to <u>the Collective</u> for nearly four centuries" (Fforde 23)</p> <p>"... <u>Our Munsell</u> works in mysterious ways. Top <u>Chromatologists</u> have thought long and hard over the spoon question, and have come to the conclusion that, since <u>the Word of Munsell is infallible</u>, there must be some greater plan to which we are not yet privy" (Fforde 120).</p> <p>"<u>The Colorman</u> stood up and joined <u>deMauve</u> at the lectern. ... This was, after all, a man from <u>National Color</u>. He represented freedom from a drab world, and <u>the Word of Munsell personified</u>. Everyone was in awe of <u>National Color</u>—even, it was said, <u>Head Office</u>" (Fforde 111).</p> <p>"But as I turned to leave I looked up and there, <u>painted upon</u> the curved plaster ceiling was <u>a vast mural</u> that told me <u>in pictorial terms</u> the story of <u>Munsell's Epiphany</u> and the Founding of the Collective. Although there was much that I didn't understand, there were sections that were instantly recognizable, such as <u>The Dispersal of the Treasures</u>, <u>The Expulsion of the Experts</u> and <u>The Closing of the Networks</u>" (Fforde 92).</p>



Munsell Colour System

Actual world	Fictional text-world
<p>The Ishihara test is a colour vision test for detection of red-green colour deficiencies.</p>	<p>Ishihara</p> <p>"...But all doubts came to nought <u>the morning of your Ishihara</u>. No one could cheat <u>the Colorman</u> and <u>the color test</u>. What you got was what you were, forever. <u>Your life, career and social standing decided right there and then, and all worrisome life uncertainties eradicated forever</u>. You knew who you were, what you would do, where you would go and what was expected of you. In return, you simply accepted your position within the <u>Colortocracy</u>, and assiduously followed <u>the Rulebook</u>. <u>Your life was mapped</u>. ..." (Fforde 20).</p>

"The Green woman's bossy attitude was not atypical. We were three notches lower in the Chromatic scale, which officially meant we were subservient. But although lower in the Order, we were still Prime within the long-established Red-Yellow-Blue Color Model, and a Red would always have a place in the village Council, something the Greens, with their bastard Blue-Yellow status could never do. It irritated them wonderfully. Unlike the dopey Oranges, who accepted their lot with a cheery, self-effacing good humor, Greens never managed to rise above the feeling that no one took them seriously enough. The reason for this was simple: They had the color of the natural world almost exclusively to themselves, and felt that the scope of their sight-gift should reflect their importance within the Collective. Only the Blues could even *begin* to compete with this uneven share of the Spectrum, as they owned the sky, but this was a claim based mainly on surface area rather than a variety of shades, and when it was overcast, they didn't even have that" (Fforde 8).

Key conclusions:

- Such "cultural appropriation" aims to create the dystopian world and highlight its main characteristics:
- ⇒ the novel depicts the all-controlling totalitarian state with the almighty leader and ideologist;
- ⇒ the society is unequal and strictly stratified, and social mobility of an individual is impossible.

Works cited:

- Beauchamp, Gorman L. "Future Words: Language and The Dystopian Novel." *Style*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1974, pp. 462–476.
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- Fforde, Jasper. *Shades of Grey: The Road to High Saffron*. Hodder & Stoughton, 2010.