

Voicing Colourspaces: Colour-usage and Response as Alternative Narration in Dennis Cooley's *Bloody Jack*

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Abstract

Dennis Cooley has attempted to unsettle several complex issues relating to post modernity, intertextuality, mingling of genres, decentering authority etal. His poetry is rich in complexity and in dealing with the problems of the text. He has published three books of poetry. *Leaving* (Turnstone 1980), *Fielding* (Thistledown 1983) and *Bloody Jack* (Turnstone 1985). His poetry reveals his interest in formal departures from the tyranny of orthodox running rhythm, and the left hand margin. From *Leaving* to *Bloody Jack*, Cooley has decentred authority from its traditional formal and ideological strongholds including the author, and placed it in the mind and heart of the reader. In his books of poetry, especially *Bloody Jack*, Cooley tends to deal with flexibility, knowledge and tolerance and seeks to voice the sparsely populated and neglected space of the Canadian prairie. This paper is an attempt to read Dennis Cooley's *Bloody Jack* from the semiotic perspective of his use of colour as sign-code in it and the other related issues that it voices.

[**Keywords:** Dennis Cooley, Bloody Jack, Colourspace, decentering, Canadian Poetry]

Bloody Jack is a book as termed by its author. Cooley cautiously avoids the term book of poetry as he incorporates in it diverse genres and multiple voices. This intertextuality of *Bloody Jack* tends to vindicate Cooley's faith in an all inclusive genre. The lawlessness of *Bloody Jack* Krafchenko can be read as a metaphor to the lawlessness of the text, since it defies conformation to any given rules of composition. Identity is based on difference and exclusion but in *Bloody Jack* Cooley attempts at the creation of identity through accumulation and inclusion of all genres. In the essay 'On the Edge of Genre', Smaro Kamboureli writes:

Bloody Jack could be described as a documentary poem about a Ukranian bandit, persecuted by the Winnipeg police force and loved by the Ukranian community in Winnipeg in the 1910s. Cooley gives his primary sources in the beginning of the poem. Yet he supersedes the documents at hand and meanders through a web of genres, and of authentic and forged documents. One of his epigraphs is by Julia Kristeva talking about Menippean Satire, which she defines as an 'all inclusive genre'. This sums up the documentary nature of *Bloody Jack*. Far from being a document about a specific criminal whom some of the public nevertheless saw as a Robinhood figure thus parodying the law – *Bloody Jack* becomes a document of the genre interplay that characterizes the long poem. One might, argue that *Bloody Jack* is about the poet's dream of living in the margins: the lover and poet as outlaw. (1991 171)

Like Krafchenko, Dennis Cooley, too, tends to advocate a lawlessness in literature by defying the strict compartmentalization of genre. Cooley is the outlawed author who aims at decentering and marginalising himself from the book and attempts a dissemination and deconstruction of his authorial role. *Bloody Jack* aims at an interesting mixture of the two types of decentering impulse at work. 'The aesthetic of

absence' which attempts to obliterate all limits and boundaries separating genres, rejects all attempts of formulating differences in order to deny and resist the idea of the existence of a place and a moment out of which one could write. This is one mode which is associated with the postmodern impulse of decentering. The Prairie writers on the other hand correspond to the other variety of the decentering impulse, which asserts privileged instances of presence. This version resists marginalisation and tends to view the supposed 'universals' as ideological constructs which are originally local in nature and whose values are not inherent, but relative and culturally determined. Thus writing out of one's place and moment is a strategy to counter that authority which makes one local and central and consequently others marginal. In his interview with Daniel S. Lenoski, Cooley said:

Is life in Manhattan any less local than life in Winnipeg? I think not. The reason it seems not to be any less local is that, for the time being, it inhabits a world that is exporting itself in movies and television and books and so on. This exports accompany military and economic presence of that nation in various ways ...So, the recognition of texts, in places other than where they were written, has really very little to do with how locally located they are, it has a lot to do with how seriously a culture is treated elsewhere and that in turn has very little to do with its own merit. (1986 176)

In *Bloody Jack* Cooley tends to coalesce the two types of decentering impulses as he attempts to challenge and deconstruct the very idea of centre as either presence or ideological construct. Cooley undertakes to do so primarily through 'transgression' and 'dialogue' (ibid.). In the process of transgression of convention, generic boundaries as well as textual limits, Cooley allows a dialogue between the multiple voices and open spaces in *Bloody Jack*. He dislocates the very concept of a textual centre by questioning the traditional notions of unity and identity of genre, work, theme, history, truth, character and author. *Bloody Jack* therefore, is a space for generic hybridity and textual decentering as well as a dislocation of the author's authority.

Unlike any other book, the semiotic analysis of the use of colour as sign-code in *Bloody Jack* should be initiated from its cover. The colour scheme as well as the layout of the cover shows a white background with a fading brownish face and the title *Bloody Jack* in bloody red whereas the words 'a book by Dennis Cooley' in black. The colour sign-codes of white, blood red, black and brown evoke corresponding emotional responses and connotations that read into the cover design. Smaro Kamboureli says about the brownish fading face:

what we see is an indistinct face – the 'pale spectacle' of historical Krafchenko taken from a newspaper photograph, a dissolved identity becoming an anonymous icon. (1991 179)

It is interesting to note that Kamboureli makes no mention of the colours used, which from the semiotic perspective of the analysis of colour as sign-code is essential. The lay out design and the colour scheme tends to create a faded, old photograph like effect on the face of Krafchenko whose outlines are dissolved in the white background. The brown colour of Krafchenko's face as a colour sign-code evokes the corresponding responses of antiquity and abstractness. It is more like a character receding into the poem and merging with the poet. The brown face has a matte texture, which enhances this effect of dissolving and merging in to the background. Just as *Bloody Jack* transcends and coalesces generic identity for a textual space where all voices are dissolved to create a unique effect, similarly the cover also provides a space for the dissolution of the distinct boundaries of the poem, the poet

and the character. The title of the book is in blood red colour. It seems that this brightness and tone was intended to convey the idea of 'bloody' as violent and menacing. The colour code red of the title on the cover page provides a direct correspondence to the emotions of violence and passion in the reader, an impact that Krafchenko himself has on him. The brightness of this particular colour code-sign red also reads as the prominence of Krafchenko in comparison to Dennis Cooley whose name reads feeble and skeletal in the colour black. This also suggests Krafchenko's relatively greater importance than the author whose authority is subjected to gradual decentralization. The dimension of the author in comparison to the character is all the more effective when a comparison between the font size of *Bloody Jack* and 'a book by Dennis Cooley' is made. The fact that Dennis Cooley as the author proves ineffective in centralizing his authority and regulating the character of Krafchenko is evident from such instances where in 'high drama', he has real difficulty in regulating them through the script written in a pre-enactment time-frame as a strategy of the writer's control over his character.

COOLEY (*to you dear reader*) why don't they make love? (*to them*) Hay! What are you doing? (*they woke up, discovered*) I want you to make love. I'm pretty disappointed in your characters, especially you Krafchenko... KRAFCHENKO (*recovered*) But out buddy. It's none of your business. (Kraf and Penny begin to kiss. Defiant, then lost in it. Cooley looks angry and impatient).

COOLEY ... According to the script, Kraf, you get yr ass out here. Then Penny is supposed to make a play for me. Wrote it that way. A clear case of textual authority, of my authority. My authorization....(222)

The ideas of textual/sexual and authorial authority and supremacy are violated in such instances and can be connected with the comparative dimness and diminished skeletal font size of the author's name as against the bright, large and prominent font of the character's name in the cover. The colour sign-code white of the background is suggestive of the idea of vast space as context and is comparable to the idea of Prairie as vast, limitless place. The white of the background serves as the context for Krafchenko's slowly dissolving and collapsing brown face. The Prairie threatens the settler/viewer with infinite vastness of space and subjects him to annihilation and dissolution of identity just as the text consisting of Krafchenko's story is subjected to a dissolution of generic identity. White as a colour sign-code is highly assimilative in nature and vast in perception. The colour white is predominantly used by contemporary Canadian Prairie poets and writers as a code for evoking the vastness of the snow covered Canadian Prairie in winter. The white colour of the cover as sign-code serves the same purpose.

Bloody Jack opens with an epigraph by Julia Kristeva in which she discusses and summarizes the idea of Menippean discourse and its all-inclusive nature as propounded and explicated by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. The concept of Mennipea speaks about an all-inclusive genre realized by blurring the boundaries/distinctions of and mixing other genres. *Bloody Jack* corresponds to that. The identity of Mennipea is the consequence of the decentering impulse and an attempt to define in terms of inclusion rather than exclusion. A Mennipea can never be completed, as there is always something more to add to it. Mennipea tends to resist textual boundaries and dismisses such boundaries as being arbitrary in nature. This epigraph from Julia Kristeva predicts the techniques used by Cooley in his *Bloody Jack* and prepares the reader to a certain extent, as to how it should be read. The epigraph is as follows:

Elements of the fantastic, which never appear in epic or tragic works, crop forth here ... Pathological states of the soul, such as madness, split personalities, daydreams, dreams, and death, become part of the narrative....Menippean discourse tends towards the scandalous and eccentric in a language. The “inopportune” expression, with its cynical frankness, its desecration of the sacred, and its attack on etiquette, is quite characteristic. This discourse is made up of contrasts: virtuous courtesans, generous bandits, wise men that are both free and enslaved, and so on. It uses abrupt transitions and changes; high and low, rise and fall, and misalliances of all kinds. Its language seems fascinated with the ‘double’ (with its own activity as graphic *trace*, doubling an ‘outside’) and with the logic of opposition replacing that of identity in defining terms. It is an all-inclusive all genre, put together as a pavement of citations. It includes all genres (short stories, letters, speeches, mixtures of verse and prose) whose structural signification is to denote the writer’s distance from his own and other texts.

The multi-stylism and multi-tonality of this discourse and the dialogical status of its word explain why it has been impossible for classicism, or for any other authoritarian society, to express itself in a novel descended from Menippean discourse. (Epigraph to *Bloody Jack*)

In the true Menippean mould, *Bloody Jack* includes poetry, prose, letter, report, newspaper cutting and so on. Cooley tends to deconstruct the idea of writing out of a particular time or place and also delimits the notion of a closure. *Bloody Jack* appears to ‘end’ with a bar room closing time and a continuation or extension in a hangover for tomorrow. This is definitely not an end in the true sense of the term. It is rather a way of connecting the present to future. It is a strategy of stretching the present time-frame to the infinity of future. The concept of Menippea also corresponds to *Bloody Jack* being called a ‘book’ since it does not relate to any particular genre but is a dialogue of discourses that are traditionally segregated. It is the exemplification of the concept of the text as a dialogic space where multiple voices merge and emerge. It is also a space for dialogue between the text, the author and the reader as well as the outlaw Jack Krafchenko who refuses to be captured in (and hence defies) language. Krafchenko voices how the strategy of ‘making me one of their characters’ (16) is being negated by him as ‘you can’t see me on the page’ (17) because

to find me
you must read be
tween the lines (18)

This is a strategy of resisting all fictional writing, even that which is termed ‘non fiction.’

This also draws attention to the epigraph of Roland Barthes that reads as follows:

There have not been here only writers hungering for reality and brilliant narrators whose ‘dazzling’ verve carries off a man’s head’; whatever the degree of guilt of the accused, there was also the spectacle of a terror which threatens us all, that of being judged by a power which wants to hear only the language it lends us. We are all potential Dominicans, not as murderers but as accused, deprived of language, or worse, rigged out in that of our accusers, humiliated and condemned by it. To rob a man of his language in the very name of language: this is the first step in all legal murders. (2)

Cooley's intention in *Bloody Jack* is also a decentering of language as a means of securing authority and control. The strategy of controlling the character by providing a definite language for him to express himself is a sure instance of the supreme authority of a writer in a text. Roland Barthes points out that through his control over language, a writer tends to situate himself in the centre of the text. Cooley violates such centering of authority by including multiple voices in the text where even a hand written letter to Krafchenko by his 'jipsylady' (64) is included. The all-inclusive nature of *Bloody Jack* is an illustration also of intertextuality. Tzvetan Todorov while discussing Bakhtin's dialogical principle in his *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* comments that although Bakhtin has used this term to denote 'a privileged instance of itself', he also used the term in a much broader sense in which 'all discourse is dialogic' (Todorov 1984 60-64) The latter depends upon the observation that all utterances are related to all other utterances (except for certain neologisms on their early appearance). This is because all words have 'always already been used' and thus 'carry within themselves the traces of preceding usage' (60-64). This vindicates the concept that all texts are intertextual and the notion that no matter how extensively footnoted a text may be, full documentation of its sources is impossible and is a mere fiction. Therefore, Julia Kristeva's 'plagiaristic' usage of Bakhtin's language (as is used in *Bloody Jack* quoted from her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel)," illustrates her appropriation of a broad collection of his ideas and phrasings. Cooley, in this context, remarks that plagiarism is a "culturally endorsed construct" (D'Aoust 136) which seeks to ascribe ownership to words and ideas, thus restricting the idea of text. Cooley writes in his *The Vernacular Muse* that:

The word "plagiarism" did not enter the language until after the Renaissance and has no etymology at least no recorded history before that. A neologism – like, "ecology" in the Romantic period – manufactured to fit a new sense of 'fact' and value, it has taken us for the last few centuries away from the sense of a shared language whose ingredients were openly available in a kind of verbal communication (1987 200)

Cooley's *Bloody Jack* in fact extends back to many more unnumbered pages before pagination where he has acknowledged all his colleagues, friends, family members, other writers and so on as has been suggested to extend the idea of the text in an intertextual space by reading into the cover design and the use of colour as sign-code in it.

The other post-modernist strategy which Cooley utilizes in *Bloody Jack*, is a deliberate negation and subversion of the notion of history. His time-frame is in all probability pre-World War I Winnipeg as he says in his interview to Daniel S. Lenoski titled 'Voicing Prairie Space: Interview with Dennis Cooley'. (1986 177). But as a subversion to this historical frame, he inserts into it names of his contemporaries, thus once again resisting the idea of writing out of a time and place. In his use of colour as sign-code too, Dennis Cooley exhibits a tendency to evoke corresponding emotional responses in his reader. It is to be noted here that Cooley restricts himself in his use of colour as sign-code within a specific set of colours and tends to evoke the desired impact on his readers through them.

The first section *dear valentine* shows the use of colour code red in:

in february
when the cold cruises past
like a pet gander

in snuffle of wind
 when afternoon light
 stumbles over the house
 & the moon
 elbows propped on the window
 shimmy-shuffles in to our room
 on cold hens feet
 mercury curls in on himself
 like an intestine
 the tungsten frost
 shunts the sky
 like boxcars startled awake
 & night
 ratchets down on us
 with a buzz
 & you home
 in yr *red* toque
 leaning like a speedskater
 into the torque of wind
 home at last
 in *toque & tongue* (1 *italics mine*)

The red colour is again evocative of the emotion of violence and passion and as such the mention of red, in this section can be read as an extension to the colour red of the cover page. The very title of this chapter *dear valentine* corresponds to the idea of valentine symbolizing passion and love and the colour sign-code corresponds to these emotions directly. The Krafchenko story reads itself as the violent anecdote of a violent man one who is seen as sexually potential and virile, casting his irresistible charm on women. The connotation of sexual potency blends emotion of violence with passion. The evocative details of February in winter with dull afternoon lights, the moon propping on the window, the cold wind, falling mercury level and tungsten coloured frost create an ambience of cold and desolation. The emotion of melancholy correlates itself to such an atmosphere and the colour red of 'red toque' brings an air of freshness and brightness to the scene. This is similar to the impact that the bright red coloured fonts of *Bloody Jack* create on the white background of the cover page. The colour code-sign red also suggests warmth and shelter in an otherwise cold, wintry world. The idea of home as a place of warmth and comfort in a desolate and cold world is further enhanced by the use of the colour sign/code red which itself is a warm colour. The following lines further extend this:

Then you
 My love you are
 The stove (3)

The beloved in red toque metaphorically becomes the stove- the source of warmth as well as warmth itself. The red colour as sign-code extends and justifies this transformation.

The next section *the yard* reads thus:
 Cool.Ragweed in one corner. A *light* rain falling. The
 prisoner enters dressed in standard prison *grey*. He
 walks, steadily, toward us, between the 2 guards.

air whistling inside
 leg bones like mine shafts holed
 the arm muscles tracking thru
 stomach melting

food into sugars
 pour into *darkred* tubes
 his beard
 feeding
 slowly
 as quartz
 old cells burning out
 cells freeing new cells
 so kids soap bubbles
 off wires
 hoop in millions
 slippery as mud
 & his *black* hair
 sledging back
 minute (2 italics mine)

Krafchenko, the prisoner, is dressed in the colour grey. The colour sign-code grey corresponds immediately to the emotion of melancholy and lack of enthusiasm. The scene presents the almost execution of Jack Krafchenko. The idea of execution becomes even more prominent by the use of the colour grey. The colour code-sign grey together with the colour sign-code dark red implies the idea of execution - a violent termination of life. This section reads:

He is *dark* and strongly built and the muscles (you can see) are tight in his back.

...

rain spotting *dark grey* patches on his shoulders
emerging (5 italics mine)

The melancholic overtone in the use of the colour dark is further extended and it envelops the entire scene. The painting-like effect that the visualization of this scene creates in the mind of the reader shows the predominance of the colour signs-codes of grey, black, dark and dark red. Krafchenko, the Ukrainian outlaw, persecuted by Winnipeg police and loved by the Ukrainian community in Winnipeg in 1910s (Kamboureli 179) stands for his execution, a figure in grey prison clothes and dark grey patches emerging on his shoulders, dark complexion and black hair amidst rain. This section ends with the momentary suffocation before execution. The stiffness, the sudden lack of warmth and a momentary icy coldness, as well as the taste of 'old spoons' in the mouth suspends the scene and leaves it suspended.

The section *in his tangerine skin* speaks of Krafchenko's burial and again through the use of the colour sign-code dark (it is a shade or a degree of intensity rather than any particular colour) evokes the corresponding emotions of death, lack of life and coldness associated with death. The colour dark acts as a background to death in which all other colours signifying the spectrum of life is dissolved and buried. Dark in this context acts as a substitute of black (as in the colour of night). Krafchenko, the Bloody Jack, was gorgeous even in his death and the idea of inhaling the dark suggesting assimilation into death is given a twist when it is stated that at the time of burial too, his eyes were alive and were symptomatic of life.

we buried him
 in mint condition
 on his eyes
 two georges
 they shone like hens eyes
 he inhaled the *dark*
hhhhgg hggg

engorged it
 like a badger breathing
 for blood
 when we shovelled him in
 christ he was a gorgeous man
 the eyes were breathing
 & shining blood. (7 italics mine)

'Shining blood' shows the use of the colour sign-code red as the brilliant and bright colour of blood and it evokes the emotional equivalence of life ironically attributed to Krafchenko even in his death. The law of the land as well as the authority of the author is decentred here. Execution by legal judgement is a means of silencing the outlaw through death. It is a strategy towards silencing a non-conformist, a rebel or an outlaw, who threatens the restrictions of society and their validity. The strategy of silencing Krafchenko through execution and relegating him to the darkness of death is resisted by him even in death when, in contrast to the dark of his burial, his eyes were alive in a shining blood (to be read as colour red) colour. This is an affirmation of life and a resistance to silencing even through death. The corresponding colour sign-code of brilliant red in association with shining blood asserts life against death.

Description of Krafchenko (8) again emphasizes the predominance of the colour sign-codes brown in 'Brown eyes', and dark in 'Dark complexion'. Brown of Krafchenko's eyes reminds of the brown colour of the face on the cover page. The colour brown corresponds to the emotions of naturalness to a certain extent as brown is also the colour of the earth. This reads as suggestive of Krafchenko's sexual potency and virility and his sense of romanticism. His numerous sexual relations with Penny, the 'jipsylady', and so on, substantiate this. Brown as the colour sign-code, therefore seems to relate to Krafchenko's irresistible sexual charm. Krafchenko's epitaph speaks about his sexuality.

hear about Kraf
 yup
 got laid once
 too often too bad
 he was a genital man (15)

The colour sign-code dark which in this book has been used as an intense shade of black (normally it denotes a degree and is associated with other colour sign-codes, but used independently, denotes black such as dark night) evokes the emotions of mystery, enigma, incomprehensibility that Krafchenko's character projects. Bloody Jack Krafchenko is a powerful character, who transcends the authority of Dennis Cooley, the author, and becomes the master of his own destiny. Cooley's impulse of decentering together with his inclusion of different genres in his genreless book gives manifold perspectives from which Jack Krafchenko has been viewed. This tends to make him mysterious, enigmatic and incomprehensible related to the colour sign-code dark connecting this to the colour sign-code brown of his eyes. From the resultant emotions evoked, it can be inferred that the colour dark also alludes to his almost primitive sexual appetite as well as his magical and unexplainable charms on women. The dark colour of his complexion in addition acts as a sign-code in evoking the responses of enigma and mystery of the criminal tendencies in him. Krafchenko the outlaw is a criminal and is doomed to execution. The dark colour relates itself to his evil and negative aspect. His description reads thus:

John Krafchenko. Age 33. Height, 5 ft. 10 inches. Weight, 175 lbs. Nationality, Hungarian. *Brown* eyes. *Dark* complexion. Dimple on chin. Clean shaven. Walks erect with quick smart action. Well built. Generally well dressed, and

has a good appearance. He was a professional wrestler and travelled through this country and through the United States about seven or eight years ago, giving wrestling exhibitions under the name of Patrick (Pearly) Friesen. Krafchenko speaks the following languages: Russian, German, Bulgarian, Italian, Mennonite, and English fluently. He is a machinist and engineer, and can make himself useful about any kind of machinery. He is an expert revolver shot, and will probably shoot to prevent arrest. (8)

The physicality of these details thus reads further into his psyche through a semiotic interpretation of the colours as sign-codes used to describe him.

In *that fateful day*, which is a fictional rendering of the interaction between Jack Krafchenko and the T.V. crew, the colour sign-code dark is used again.

He was sitting beside a big guy with *dark* droopy moustaches.
(11 italics mine)

The predominance of the colour sign-code dark once again asserts itself as evocative of a melancholic and mysterious feeling and as a background to both Krafchenko's story and his character. Cooley's use of the colour sign-code dark is deliberate. He intends to portray Krafchenko in a dark manner and at the same time wants to associate him with a sense of mystery and incomprehensibility. This is a strategy to prevent the readers from making any simplistic and reductionist reading of both Krafchenko's character and the book.

In the poem *diane* the use of colour as sign-code is conspicuous. The colour of light yellowish brown is associated with cinnamon. But Cooley complicates the use of colour here as he attaches dark to it:

so I
breathe in the moon
my lips his lips
on them bruised
my brothers
trickle the moonlight
its *dark cinnamon*
this night this month of
moths and wind
into his mouth
the night *blood*
filling his mouth with my *blood*
filling him life a vein
your eyes
when they stare
startled
soon our October moon
treacles your neck
our broken skin
the air flippers in
and your body starts
the *dark* swimming
through muscles
through bones
so (19 italics mine)

The colour of moonlight is here darkened to give the scene of lovemaking a sinister charm. The physicality of sexual union is depicted through a series of suggestive

and direct images. The use of colours as signs-codes adds both suggestive and pictorial details to this section. The colour of light yellowish brown (cinnamon colour) has its lightness negated by the use of the term dark. Just as Cooley tends to decenter textual authority, the colour sign-code dark also attempts to decenter the authority as well as the natural character of the cinnamon colour by smudging off its lightness. The moonlight, therefore, appears dark and connects itself with the predominance of the usage of the colour sign-code dark in this book. Everything here is darkened and appears mysterious. The dark cinnamon is further extended to dark swimming so as to envelop the entire atmosphere and mood of the poem in a dark ambience. Even the colour red which is associated with blood, is presented as night blood. Night once again is related to the colour dark and darkens the colour of blood, which is red. The colour red, which is suggested by the word blood again, emphasizes the idea of violence in passion and a powerful sexual union. Dennis Cooley in his interview with Daniel S. Lenoski says:

One of the other things I had in mind since you speak of possession, was that Diana is also a witch figure, isn't she, and there's some notion of being bewitched or possessed (179)

The *shapes of frost* (21) is a painting in its imagist tendencies of evoking an atmosphere and a mood through a sophisticated use of colour as sign-code and suggestive details. The word 'rouge' which corresponds to red as sign-code is used here. The rubbing off of the rouge/red colour from the mouth of the moon suggests the effects of approaching winter chill on the receding warm season. This section reads thus:

leaning against August the fall corn in full kernels ripened
 until the first frost of September chewed fast like fat whitebugs
 into the sun-flower fainting in the sky and slumping over in the fields

so earth exposes its chilly cheeks
 and wan October in a huff pours big bottles of gin into the hurry of wind
 rubs the *rouge* off the moon's warm mouth.
 flaking pigment off its face powdering and pock-marking it
 then Hallowe'en shoving over half-ton toilets and shaving off the tan of
 stubble
 hoarfrost hurdling the fences. . . (21 Italics mine)

The removal of the rouge/red colour from the moon's warm mouth leads also to a sudden decolourisation of the scene in October hinting at the arrival of winter and snow, when the red of the rouge shall be replaced by the white of snow. In February the winter chill penetrative in its coldness shall envelop everything on the earth in white

And February fistled its frost fingering and unfastening windows and
 floors
 Winter nailed so hard into studs the cat froze solid in the oven one night
 and so babies bagled warm in bed woke blinking to the *bright white*.
 shapes of frost heavy *silhouettes* folded
 upon their lines of *dark* around their lanes of dreams (21 Italics mine).

The babies shall wake up to the bright white colour of winter. The colour code-sign white is bright and therefore, suddenly flashes in the otherwise cold, wintry and desolate scene as a change highlighting the contrast. Cooley attains an almost photographic precision in detailing the heavy silhouettes caused by the effect of the bright white illuminating the shapes and figures from only one direction. The effect is that of viewing the darkened figure against a bright white background increasing the

light and dark contrast of the scene. The sudden transition from the land of dreams to the land of reality would create such effects in an intermediate state between sleeping/dreaming and awakening. Cooley secures the internalization of this externalized scenic effect into the lanes of dreams. Dark refers to the other side of the silhouette, the side that is away from light and metaphorically corresponding to the dark recesses of the human psyche.

In *jail/night before* the dark colour is once again re-emphasized. Darkness as colour sign/code prevails throughout the book and Cooley ensures that the readers are always enveloped in a sense of melancholy and mystery

and
 .lone
 .alone standing.
 in the thin
 so: a pin on cold water
 off paper slides/ (22 Italics mine)

The colour sign-code dark is repeated in an increased intensity in the second instance 'so dark'. The darkness brings no hope for Krafchenko. It is the darkness of the night before his execution and the distant appearance of the

small holes of
 red & yellow
 opened in the black
 holes other holes...(22 Italics mine);

are mere images which he cannot reach. These minute spots of red and yellow opened in the black are insignificant in themselves. The colour sign-codes of red and yellow evocative of the emotional responses of passion and joy respectively in other contexts fail to do so in this context of the prison for a person who is doomed to execution. The colours red and yellow in their insignificant appearance are symbolic of happy memories of the past being engulfed in an intensely black background. The colour sign-code black relates to the emotional responses of desolation, hopelessness and bleakness. The colour black denotes that Krafchenko has no hope and can only resort to the happy memories of the past. The colour sign-code blue is given an almost unnatural association with bone in

boneblue holes (22 Italics mine)

The colour blue is evocative of peace and vastness of space, but surprisingly, here it is associated with bone and haloes. The effect of light in creating a bluish halo in the blackness of the night can be suggestive of hopelessness and lack of respite. Halo is a phenomenon of light usually associated with holiness or divinity. Thus, it appears that Cooley is being ironical in speaking about a halo in relation to Krafchenko, a seasoned criminal waiting for execution. The association of the colour sign-code blue in creating a halo in bone ironically subverts the entire idea of halo as a divine phenomenon in Krafchenko's case. The play of the colour sign-codes of red, yellow and blue comes down to the usual tone of melancholy, dullness and hopelessness which runs through out the book (being inextricably intertwined with the dark character of Krafchenko as a criminal and his hopeless fate. In the lines

Brown dog digs (23 Italics mine)

The colour brown evokes the emotions of melancholy in the scene. However, there is a sudden surge of passion in the use of the colour sign-code red, which relates to passion, urge and yearning (for the beloved) in the lines

& hair smell of you wet
 in crash of night far
 throating of you
stay with me
stay with me
 & *red* rain on me...(24 Italics mine)

The grey and dark melancholic scene changes with a splash of red rain. The colour red evokes, intensely passionate longing for the lover to stay back, for life to remain.

Benny's Diction (25) is a reassertion of Krafchenko's irresistible charm but also asserts his dark nature and darker intentions.

innocent children's lives would be *darkened*. (25 Italics mine)

The colour dark associates itself with the emotions of mystery and negative connotations of characters. Krafchenko as a criminal is made conspicuous by his dark deeds. His is a dark character in a darkened atmosphere. The dark aspect is all-prevalent and is re-emphasized again and again by the use of the colour sign-code dark in the book. This connects itself to the dark of 'midnight waiting in cold'

.....*dark*
 stooped over us
 her giant shadows jerking
 over them
 their fingers on the ledge
 shedding edges of silence
 paddling on the other end
 in puddles of *yellow* (27 Italics mine)

The pattern of yellow puddles in a dark cold midnight is a pattern evoking association of warmth in cold. The colour sign-code dark is the usual background evoking emotions of cold, desolation and hopelessness, whereas yellow as colour suddenly evokes emotions of warmth and companionship in this dismal dark scene. The reader of this book is enveloped in a general melancholic mood of darkness except for flashes of other colours as sign-codes here and there. The latter are only monetary whereas the former stays throughout intensified again and again in almost all the genres that Cooley has included in *Bloody Jack*. . Lines such as:

right now she's groppin around
 in the gusts of *dark* banging. . . (29 Italics mine),

shows the evocation and intensification of melancholy by the extension of the colour sign-code dark as devoid of hope and light.

Boating is again conspicuous for the use of a number of bright colours as sign-code:

wishing to hear her
 wishing her
 here
 her hair *red* &
 her hands the bones like birds
 how they rise in the *blue*
 and the *green* of her eyes
 how when she comes
 to my mind she comes
 a hot wind

swishing inside
 fingernailing the mindflesh
 so the sweat of her neck stings
 her touch leaves
 marks on my back
 raises a hangnail in my thoughts
 her sudden weight singing
 my ribs like a glass xylophone. (32 Italics mine)

The yearning for the beloved to be near is evoked in these lines. The desire to 'hear' her voice, to have her 'here' communicates a strong sense of longing. The use of the colour red as sign-code to denote the colour of her hair also corresponds to the emotions of strongly felt passion and a violent urge to be united with her. The blue colour, which forms the backgrounds for her hands to rise is compared to the blue of the sky on which the birds fly. The colour sign-code blue evokes the emotions of vastness, space and coolness, which suggest the idea that the presence of the beloved ensures such feelings. The colour green of her eyes corresponds to naturalness and purity of love. The use of these colours of red, blue and green in an otherwise dismal and desolate atmosphere of darkness is refreshing for Krafchenko who awaits execution. The colour sign-codes associate themselves with the features of the beloved and evoke an ambience of passion and longing.. The sweat accumulated on her neck strings, her touch leaving nail marks on his back evoke strong sexual connotations. That which was initiated by the use of colour sign-codes culminates into a strong feeling of sexual desire. The reversion to the prevailing atmosphere of darkness takes place through the use of the colour sign-code black in

Somewhere in the *black*
 That is stalled at the back of my mind (33 Italics mine)

The blackness evoked by the colour black obliterates the previous colour sign-codes and their corresponding emotional responses in one sweep. This suggests that the yearning for the beloved and the suggestions of her physical presence through the use of the colours red, blue and green were only wishes. It was a dream for Krafchenko whose reality is the blackness/darkness both within and without.

In "the telephone pole", Cooley uses the colour sign-code white in
 The telephone pole quivers & flashes its *white* flesh. (36 italics mine)

It is a strange association as the colour sign-code white is here applied to flesh of the pole's metallic body. The telephone pole is here personified and its silver white colour is termed flesh. The colour white here seems to evoke the idea of artificiality and lack of life of the metallic pole. The telephone pole 'shaken with messages' appears to quiver and flush its white flesh and this probably suggests it's almost humanization as a courier of human messages. In contrast to use of the white colour to symbolize metallic artificiality, the attempt to tap the code or rather decipher the voice of the beloved evokes the association of the colour green in

 your voice budding/building
 up in my ear
 quavers round in the air
 green in my chest (36 italics mine)

This use of the colour green evokes the emotion of natural love and passionate yearning to hear the beloved's voice. Krafchenko deliberately yearns for 'her' presence but it never materializes except in a flash back to the past.

In *the lady with lamp*, again there is strong assertion of the physical yearning and longing. The strong sexual connotation of a union as well as 'anticipation' as the generator of physical heat is evoked by the use of the colour yellow as sign-code:

in the *yellow* flutter of my life
 when you touch me
 if you are not careful
 you will burn
 yourself (40 italics mine)

It is to be noted here that in the otherwise dark character and the dark atmosphere of Krafchenko, the other colours as sign-codes that appear have strong sexual connotation evoking responses of passion and physical union. The colour sign-code yellow here also associates itself with the warmth of physical proximity between the lover and the beloved. The darkness continues in such lines as

my bones they rub
 the linseed *dark* (44 italics mine)

and,

white
 curtains parted
 flaking off
dark ribs of men (45 italics mine)

Coolley appears to be obsessed with the colour sign-code dark. The use of the colour dark in contrast to the white curtains is all the more prominent as the white colour as sign-code acts like a façade (connotating delusion as on the snow covered white Canadian prairie) which when removed exposes the darkness within. This reads as the dark character of Krafchenko concealed under his attractive appearance and charm. The use of colours as sign-codes is also conspicuous in *light lingers*.

burning into
 the *grey/green* of your eyes
 in the picture
 fading now
 still
 more *green* than they're *grey*
 looking out/into
 the room where we
 (locked) liking
 what you could see (47 italics mine)

The title suggests a sense of the lingering of light. Metaphorically it reads as the presence of the beloved lingering in the memory. The colour sign-codes of grey and green are used to describe the eyes of the beloved. The colour sign-code green was used to describe her eyes in boating (32) too. But in *light lingers*, it takes another colour as sign-code, namely grey, in addition to itself. The warm and strong yearning for the beloved now takes on a melancholic association. The greenness of the beloved's eyes is grey slowly fading away. The only consolation is that they are still more green than grey. The culmination of the yearning is not to be realized and the hopeless yearning leads to a gradual fading away of the colour in the beloved's eyes from green to grey symbolizing a transition from naturalness and beauty to melancholy and isolation. The poem oscillates between hope and hopelessness, desire and frustration. The lines,

the cool rounds of
 your earnings

(smile
quick coming
their delicate
green
& *red*
smell of sunwarm cotton
here as i wait
in the drained
other sun other *red*
of a silent fall
a *brown* paper bag
the kid is blowing up (48 italics mine);

again brings back the colour green and red into the scene crisscrossed by green and grey of the beloved's eyes slowly fading away. The colour sign/code green correlates to a touch of life and evokes a sense of hope whereas the colour sign-code red evokes corresponding emotional responses of passion and love. The mind of Krafchenko as he waits for his destined execution weaves patterns of green and grey and red corresponding to hope, melancholy and passion, respectively. The brown colour as sign-code of brown paper is again a dismal colour that at the end of this poem intensifies his loneliness and melancholy. The flashes of colours in the melancholic hopelessness of Krafchenko are only momentary, his darkness of character and the dark atmosphere of the poem prevails.

In *a night out*, the frenzied activity of city life is portrayed in evocative details. The colour sign-code white in section I

... sun sucks up throat juices
snorting it up
the *white* heat in nostrils ... (54 italics mine)

correlates to physical exhaustion and the colour sign-code red in

... day rides off in a *red* wind ... (54 italics mine)

extends this idea of vigorous, exhausting activity further. The white as colour sign/code here does not evoke emotional responses of peace and calm but rather of physical exhaustion and heated panting which follows activity. The day passes off very fast and is associated through the use of the colour sign-code red with violent activity and resultant heat. The colour sign-code red starts from where the implication of white stops. However the use of the colour sign-code white is connected further to the section IV.

falls back
to the ground
morning unzips
white with skin
one eye in the head
aches like aspirin (55 italics mine)

The dawn hour is associated with the colour white, which is exposed through the act of unzipping. The colour code-sign white which is usually associated with purity, chastity and is used sometimes to denote the peace and calm of the morning, seem to evoke an emotional response of artificiality here. The white of the morning does not appear natural in its unzipping and its aching like aspirin. White is used here to evoke a sense of unnaturalness and discomfort. The pleasant calm of the morning

is lacking here and seems to be an implication in consonance with Krafchenko's state of mind and his life.

In *the script*, Krafchenko watches the clerk's pen moving swiftly on paper and recording the court proceedings. The process of recording the proceedings on paper is an act of controlling the character from the centre of authority. The pen of the reporter jots down the utterances of Krafchenko in an attempt to bind him and define him from his own utterances. Krafchenko is aware of this strategy and the following lines read as

my words out of the sound
drawing them from where
they roar like a toaster
his pen
stroking fast
all the sounds muffle
into ink as it sprawls
down crawls through layers and
layers of
pulverized trees
faintly trembling
the black pen
the paper
running out steadily into
running down
the sheets
lying there
crisp & white
as an English virgin (64 italics mine)

The colour black here is suggestive of authority and the resultant bondage. The colour black in the process of transcribing limits to Krafchenko's identity is an appendage to an autocratic authority that tends to limit and blind. Writing is, therefore, viewed as a strategy to impose restrictions. This is precisely the point where Cooley attempts at decentering the textual authority of the book through Krafchenko's realization of this strategic move. The colour code-sign black in its evocation of the emotional responses of being bound, restrained and captive (in language) is contrasted to the white colour of the paper. The colour white evokes the responses of vastness, infinity and uncontrollable indefiniteness that tend to resist assimilation through language. This is parallel to the white colour of the Canadian Prairie in winter, a recurrent image in Canadian prairie poetry. The white snow covered winter prairie, too resists assimilation and definition and attempts to record/describe it in Canadian prairie poetry and fiction are also attempts at assimilating, defining and taming it which it resists. The sign-code white of the paper on which Krafchenko's utterances and the court proceedings are being recorded by a black pen, suggests an image of assimilation and definition of an identity through language. White is also used to compare the white paper with a crisp and white English virgin and the act of writing as a violation of that sanctity/ chastity. This suggestion of writing as an act of defining, continues through the following lines:

they come the scribes
in *black*
to see
the carbon
copy of my words where
will i be

what they read here
in jangled *yellow*
my loud venal sins like deerflies/
embalmed
lies penned up in their
like false
teeth
all that's left. (66 italics mine)

The idea of the carbon copy of words where Krafchenko will be is an assertion of this strategy of writing to bind and restrict. The prison here is that of language penned down on white paper. There is a sense of identification between the black pen and the societies in black as being accomplices in this strategy of capturing and defining. The colour code-sign black takes a negative connotation here from the perspective of the act of writing as a binding and limiting process. Krafchenko doubts he will be what they read on the papers in jangled yellow. The colour yellow as sign-code corresponds to lifelessness and lack of reality. The reality of Krafchenko, his real self is not recorded in the papers or copies that attempted to capture him in language. Krafchenko's real identity remains elusive and only his lifeless, unreal identity has been comprehended and defined by the law of the land. His recorded identity is, therefore, captured in the jangled yellow. The yellow colour as code-sign evokes responses of unreality and lifelessness.

The *flame swallower* uses the colour sign-codes of crimson, orange and yellow to evoke a picturesque effect. The lines read as follows:

like a bottle factory on the graveyard shift
you light up
crimson in your pipes & houses
your tubes like neon
signs at a pizza parlour
all the bones by
oranges & yellows bent
your liver turns (70 italics mine)

This is a sudden change to the all-enveloping darkness serving as a background to Krafchenko's story. The flashes of the colour sign-codes of crimson (a variety of red, which is intense and deep), orange and yellow evoke responses of passion and life, brightness and vigour, respectively. It is interesting to note that the yellow as colour sign-code in this section is different from the yellow of the script (63-67). The former evokes responses of brightness and vigour in life, the latter negates such emotions in a suggestion of lack of reality. The startling evocation of colour in this scene is however short lived as it reverts back to :

... the *blue* halo
DTS round your dirty hair & fingernails ... (70 italics mine)

The blue colour as sign-code which traditionally evokes responses of peace, calm and vastness, fail to do so here and evokes a response of repulsion towards the blue colour of the accumulated dirt in hair and fingernails. This is an instance of how colour as sign-code evokes different responses in different contexts and also according to the varied intentions of the user/writer. In *corvus brachyrhynchos* the bird is described in the colour sign-codes of blue, black, green and dark (also corresponding to black)

a chunky bird
related to the *blue* jay and the magpie
totally *black* except for

a blush of *bluish* or *greenish* sheen
 concentrated on its wings back and tail
 its bill and feet are strong and *black*
 the eye is *dark* (73 italics mine)

The colourful depiction of the bird through the use of these colour sign-codes of black, blue, green and dark shows that Cooley sticks to a particular set of colours as signs/codes and uses them in diverse ways to create diverse responses. Debbie D' Aoust while discussing *Bloody Jack* as a discourse decentering textual authority and delimiting generic identity, writes

Discourse is redefined and revalued in terms of what it includes rather than what it excludes, and the book into a dialogue of discourse which are traditionally segregated. *Bloody Jack's* author is like the corvus brachyrhynchos : "an opportunist in its feeding/it will eat almost anything" D' Aoust (133).

The varied coloured bird with its peculiar characteristics of feeding on almost anything appears to be beyond everyday experience and the colour sign-codes used communicates this by evoking corresponding responses of strangeness and variety. It is interesting to note that here Cooley does not intend to evoke separate responses for the different colours as sign-codes but rather attempts at a cumulative responses of peculiarity. This is a departure from the standard use of colour as sign-code to evoke a particular emotion.

In *being an excellent liar*, Cooley describes John Larry Krafchenko as follows:
 His fearless eyes of steel *grey*, with just a hint of *green*,
 that looked out from under heavy *dark* brows.(76 italics mine)

This connects itself to the impersonal description of Krafchenko (8) which reads like a newspaper advertisement for a person wanted on criminal charges. The colours brown and dark were used to describe him. In this more personalized description of Krafchenko (76), Cooley makes use of sign-code dark which is still present as a common denominator of his character and evokes corresponding emotional responses of enigma, mystery and doubt about his character. It is remarkable to note here that the colour sign-code grey is not evocative of melancholy anymore, but combined with the word steel, relates to the quality of toughness. The colour steel grey here evokes the responses of toughness and determination (of Krafchenko in crime). The use of the colour grey as sign-code for melancholy is inoperative here as that would lead to a wrong decoding of this colour in this context. The colour sign-code green similarly does not evoke the usual responses of naturalness and affinity here, but seems to associate itself with the idea of evil as green, thus evoking corresponding emotional responses of aversion, mystery and a sort of fear about such a man.

The use of the colour sign-code white in cunning linguist, in the description of 'law abiding close-mouthed white folks'd face' ... (77) is ironical in tone. The colour sign-code white here evokes the responses of conformity, regularity and obedience to the law of the land. It is a colour which suggests peace and security which, in turn, can be attained only by abiding the law and leading a life within the bounds of society and civilization. Krafchenko is a criminal, an out-law, who violates the law and therefore gives an ironical description of the law-abiding people. Krafchenko's name 'Bloody Jack' itself shows the use of the colour sign-code bloody corresponding to the colour red which evokes an emotion of violence, passion and forceful transgression of the law of the land as done by him. This is in contradiction with the use of the colour sign-code white for compliance with law and security in life. Here it

is to be noted that this particular section crisscrosses the boundaries of prose and poetry in its own lawlessness of the violation of generic rules.

The poem *kessa* is full of sexual imagery and evocative imagery of the female body. The tremendous urge to possess the woman who is presented as an extremely desirable object of sexuality is celebrated in this section.

Kessa my she is yes such a nice pussy so warm
 Like that eh pussycat like that dont you you like that yes like
 that
 and eyes close and
 open & *green* they are *green*
green shining and warm
 & singing shaking
 (inside) your singing shaking
 your singing inside
 &
 my arm
 blood
 my arm pricked
 blood bright
red blood on my
 arm (88 italics mine)

Kessa is here identified with the female sex organ itself at the climax of a terrible urge for physical union. This corresponds to Krafchenko's virility and sexual charm. The colour sign-code green is used here to evoke the emotions of attraction and longing. The usual association of green as colour sign-code with the emotional responses of envy or naturalness is missing here. Neither does it correspond to the idea of the evil directly except for the fact that its highly sexual overtones manifest the carnality of devise. The colour green here is used by Cooley to evoke responses of sexuality and corresponds well with the colour sign-code red in the concluding lines which is the colour of blood and is used to evoke responses of violent and extremely passionate sexual desire for *Kessa*.

In the poem *freeze up*, Cooley uses the colour sign-codes of red, dark and white to evoke the winter scene of cold and chill. He writes about the rain red dust (92) and a bleeding of white (*ibid.*) in

a few pebbles
 rain *red* dust & the
 creak of hinges working hard & *dark* cracks
 open cranks its shutters open & will
 not close for the night. (92 italics mine)

The colour sign-code red in this poem evokes the corresponding emotions of sudden warmth in an otherwise dark and cold wintry scene. The red colour transmits a certain warmth to the wintry night. The colour dark corresponds to the emotions of desolation intensified further by such usage as 'dark drinks the light'. Here the colour sign-code dark is used to convey the idea that light is swallowed by the all-enveloping darkness, thus evoking corresponding emotional responses of melancholy and hopelessness at the loss of light. This also metaphorically suggests the doomed and dark fate of Krafchenko. Cooley, however, uses the colour code-sign white in 'a bleeding of white' (92), to evoke the overwhelming sense of peace and calm at the profuse strains of white sunlight in the morning.

In *gypsophila* (93), however, the yellow colour as sign-code evokes the sense of warmth and life in early November. The colour green is combined with gas (in gasgreen) to evoke a sense of naturalness and happiness at nature's lush green colour. The lines:

Penny Lyn
 her gypsophila
 in our garden
 puffs of gypsophila
 white vapour
 blown
 around the *orange*
 burn of marigolds (93 Italics mine)

depict a beautiful nature picture and the colour sign-codes white and orange cumulatively evoke the emotional responses of happiness and freshness at such a scene.

The white colour and the marigolds burning in their orange colour do not operate separately on the sensibility of the reader, but combine together to evoke the desired emotional responses natural on an early November day. However in the following lines:

where in August the *ochre*
 ate its way
 scalding there the
 window of my room
 & you bathd /breathd in
 the sick *white* acid
 inside untoucht
 that moment
 cool & still
 inside the bed (93 Italics mine)

Here the colour sign-code white is used with the word 'acid' to create a strange sensation. The colour code-sign white here evokes the corresponding emotions of purity no doubt as is emphasized by 'the phase inside untoucht'. In addition to this it also seems to indicate the idea of white sunshine bathing the 'you' of the poem who is still in bed. The word ochre is a colour sign-code. It corresponds to the colour reddish yellow and is evocative of the emotions of happiness. The lines quoted above depict the change of colour in sunlight corresponding to the different times of the day. But both are merry colours and evoke positive emotional responses suggesting that the strong undercurrent of darkness has been replaced by bright colour sign-codes and corresponding positive emotional responses.

In *skunked* the sign-code yellow of the line 'rooms pissyellow' (95) shows how the otherwise bright colour yellow as sign-code evocative of the corresponding emotions of gaiety and warmth is used here in a scatological way to evoke corresponding emotions of repulsion and nausea. This goes to prove how a writer can vary the emotional response to a particular colour sign-code according to his choice and intention to do so. This entire poem is painted in different tones of yellow. The sign-code yellow next manifests itself in 'yr eyes dipped full of/ kitchen yellow' (96) and continues to 'it scribbles out like a wink/ the yellow' (ibid.) The varied uses of the colour sign-code yellow are exhibited here. The colour sign-code yellow of 'kitchen yellow' suggests and evokes the corresponding emotional responses of warmth and belonging. The yellow glow of the kitchen (probably emanating from the kitchen fire) also evokes the emotions of security, safety and fulfillment in life. This

further evokes a feeling of being cared for and then, strongly negates the scatological 'yellow used in rooms pissyellow' (95)

The colour sign-code white is used in the in the poem 'she sd' (99) to evoke the responses of lifelessness and grotesqueness in death.

when you die she sd
she sd
its like
ghosts
shucked off
the *white*
flesh in your teeth (ibid Italics mine)

The colour sign-code white here is the white lifelessness of a corpse whose flesh, being devoid of blood appears pale and white. It is not the natural usage of the colour sign-code white, which generally evokes peace and calm. This association of colour sign-code white unsettles the reader with a sudden realization of death robbing the flesh of blood, thus making it appear dead white. This sense continues till the lines

she sd
the *white* teeth
sweat in the flesh
the wet seeds
sweet (as
salt) in my mouth melt
when you die
she sd. (ibid. Italics mine).

The emotional responses of grotesqueness and lifelessness evoked by the colour sign-code white in its association with death continues the 'sweet (as salt)' taste but suddenly changes its import to something softer and pleasant. But the lingering sense of the whiteness of death still remains as a backdrop.

The use of colour sign-codes of yellow, red and purple in *psychie* (108) have, once again, a cumulative effect in evoking sensuality and sexual urge. The 'yellow tendon', 'the twisting' of the 'red and purple ligaments' together inch by inch towards a physical union is highly evocative in these lines where the colour sign-codes of yellow, red and purple are used:

the hard thread
fancia
over it
hand full of tendons
they are *yellow*. . .
she is twisting
the *red* and *purple*
ligaments
together
inch by inch
she is
drawing in
a bed-spread (108 Italics mine)

In a peculiar manner, Cooley uses the colour sign-code yellow, one of the colours he is obsessed with to denote 'god with his yellow teeth'. (113) The emotion evoked by yellow here is that of repulsion for the yellow colour of something which is unclean

and this usage links up to the “room pissyellow” (95) and ‘the blue halo/DTS round your dirty hair and fingernails.’ (70) The brightness of the sign-code yellow is here negated and the emotional responses of gaiety and warmth are replaced by repulsion due to the unclean appearance. Cooley here presents ‘god’ in dismembered imagery of mucous smeared eyes, exploded stomachs, pieces of lungs, strings of red phlegm and so on. His mouth smells of overnight cheese. The emotion of repulsion is intensified all the more by these details. The red of red phlegm serves as a colour sign-code to evoke the emotions of violence and further extends the repulsion at the scene which appears to be an evocation of the details in a mortuary with dismembered remains of corpses scattered. Cooley depicts ‘god’ in such a scene in order to negate any notion of reverence towards divinity as something pure and chaste. This probably is a hint to Krafchenko’s dark nature and dark intentions as being contradictory to the law of the land as well as the law of God who for Krafchenko is nothing but a dismembered existence.

The poem *after the dance* is evocative of darkness and night, pointing out how once again Cooley reverts back to the colour of darkness within and without.

poplars gulping
june shouting with love &
night beer giggling us
undresses day
moves through me in a slur
my swim suit sticky from
the lake under my dress
where we go in the *dark* (121 Italics mine)

The colour code-sign dark here also corresponds to the dark recesses of human psyche and the dark and primitive carnal desires. The lake under my dress (ibid.) continues to ‘where we go in the dark’ (ibid.) and suggests that the idea relates to the ever flowing yet concealed fountain head of basic instincts which surface from time to time to be satiated through sexuality. The colour code-sign dark therefore evokes the responses of sexual and carnal desire and hints at Krafchenko’s dark psyche and virility. The image in ‘undresses day’ is again sexually connotative and links with the dormant instinct of sexuality. The cinnamon colour of the moon is revived again here in the line ‘moon is a cinnamon’ and relates the dark cinnamon moonlight in *diane* (19). The light, yellowish brown colour (cinnamon) of the moon acts as sign-code to evoke and assert the emotions of sexuality which is made prominent by the lines:

. . . moon is a *cinnamon*
candy is my mouth now
the slippery roller
coaster of him wanting
so bad those eyes
where the light goes
funny . . . (ibid Italics mine)

The story of desire and wanting for the lover (Krafchenko) is a roller coaster in its rise and fall. The overwhelming sexuality of desire makes the cinnamon coloured moon appear a candy. The light yellowish brown colour (cinnamon) as sign-code, therefore evokes a strong emotion of longing for the lover. The colour sign-code blue in ‘. . . back blue lady come back . . .’ (122) is however evocative of the emotion of melancholy owing to the realization of the inevitability of separation and transient time. The ‘blue lady’ does not come back and the melancholy is intensified.

Cooley's imagist tendencies are evident in his poem *weather it is nobler* (129) where, while describing the weather he uses the colour sign-code black in a sentence which reads as follows:

. . . The clouds are *black* as used motor oil . . . (ibid Italics mine)

Black here evokes the emotions of exhaustion. The rain clouds predicting a thunderstorm are black in colour and are compared to 'used motor oil'. The same tendencies are evident when he describes the clothes line with black and white pieces of clothing lurching forward as if chasing the frost. It is an evocative description of noontime and a cloth line hanging all alone in a vast uniform prairie demarcated by a barbed fence. The colour sign-codes black and white seem to create the checkered effect of joy and sorrow, chaos and uniformity, hope and frustration, which are the dualities of emotional responses sure to be perceived by a viewer of the prairie scene. The barbed wire fence and the clothes line lurching forward (138) reads thus:

4 miles to go
small skeleton of some bird
dangling from the barbed wire fence
long johns on the clothes lines
still rigid with night
shredded cattails
& *black* & the *whites* hurch
charing their frost (138 Italics mine)

They are associated with domesticity and order and correspond to the idea of settlement within the barbed wire fence. The land beyond is the prairie- the uncontrollable and undefined.

The use of reds and yellows in *i cld show them my heels* (139) is positive in their evocation of mirth, gaiety, brightness and happiness. The lines read as follows:

& this is when I went to work with my dad
shovelling air with the bellows
so they would smile at you
the *reds* and *yellows*....(ibid Italics mine)

Reds and yellows evoke responses of passion, life, warmth and a feeling of nostalgia for the days of childhood and early youth now lost. Krafchenko seems to evoke all these scenes in a reminiscent mood. The happiness of the by gone days is evoked here by the signs/codes of red and yellow which are both warm and passionate in nature. However the use of the colour sign-code black in *knotted like cauliflower* (144) to describe the old lady Prystupa has some magical association. The lines read thus

like old lady prystupa
in her black babusika belting out
khrystos voskres voistyno voikres (ibid. Italics mine)

Cooley uses the colour black in its usual sense to evoke the emotions of mystery and a bewilderment at the unknown. Black is an intense colour representing unfathomable depths and consequently evokes the emotions of apprehension about the unknown.

In *running in the street* (146) Dennis Cooley presents a detailed scenic description as follows:

the heavy horses
 horses heavy heaving
 on Selkirk
 the puffs beneath them
 printing Us in the dust
 chopping *grey/white/grey*
 outside breaking
 past in plates of *white*
 me cotton slippery on the eyes
 trembling round to white (147 Italics mine)

The use of colours grey and white in an alternative manner creates a strange pattern and also evokes an intricate intertwined pattern of emotional responses. The emotion of melancholy corresponds to the colour sign-code grey whereas happiness, calm and peace are evoked by the colour code-sign white. The scene thus metaphorically represents life in its weaving of grey and white and correspondingly melancholy and happiness. Krachenko's life with all his sexual adventures and evocations of happy memories of the past relate to colour sign-code white whereas his dark, criminal aspect and bleak future corresponds to the colour code-sign grey. The all-pervading grey colour as sign-code makes its appearance again and again in this book. It is extended to *of the handbones lady* (149) where it used to depict the eyes:

. . . you over me
 your eyes *grey/green*
 they are/
 opening
 & the *dark*
 the *dark* flows in
 into them . . . (ibid Italics mine)

The eyes are both grey and green evoking the responses of melancholy and beauty. These have been standard usages throughout the book and atleast using these two colours as sign-codes, Cooley does not intend to vary them much in implication. The emotional response of melancholy is triggered by the colour grey. The green colour as sign-code corresponds to the emotions of naturalness in beauty. The use of the colour sign-codes of grey and green links up to a similar use in *light lingers* (47). The colours grey and green also evoke the responses of romantic fascination. This is further intensified by the use of the colour sign-code dark which evokes a sense of mystery essential for evoking the sense of romanticism. Dark has a certain negative connotation too, and might also tend to evoke the emotional response of fear and fascination at the darker aspects of human character and psyche. The application of the colour sign-code grey to

. . . *grey*
 eyes these eyes
 your swollen low in throat our shake
 warm
 (*grey/*
 Racing) . . . (151 Italics mine)

The otherwise melancholy colour sign-code grey becomes warm here and the grey eyes communicate that by evoking the emotional responses of a certain warmth and vigour, emphasized by the next word 'Racing'. It is here that Cooley makes a transition from his usual application of the colour sign-code grey for evoking melancholy to that of grey for warmth and life.

In *blacksmith shop*, the line 'a mouth into red water' (152) depicts the use of the colour sign-code red as evocative of the emotional response of violence and vigour. Red also associates itself with blood and therefore life. The sign-code red is also the colour of passion, evoking passionate feeling. This idea of 'a mouth into red water' probably attaches to the idea of spontaneous and lively conversation justified by the next lines:

slithering with
what it knows
what it said
to me (153 *Italics mine*)

The use of the colour red continues the next section *august* (154) opening with the lines:

red wind in my head
its rolling heat through
trees over head (*ibid. Italics mine*)

Here, the sign-code red evokes the emotional response of passion in the month of August and links itself up with heat. The colour sign-code red thus evokes heated passion. The poem titled *the comma of winter* (155) uses the colour sign-codes of blue and white, both cool colours, to evoke the corresponding emotional responses of vastness and calmness, peace and security, respectively. The lines read thus:

. . .then when the *blue* blocks of bleakness would not budge would
never bleed
rigid willow sills wadded in rags against the ring of storm in wind
no more would the wasted sky stone sharpen the worn out blades of heat
sun stuttered to a solar slur in a scumbled sky

oh then the world whorled *white* (155 *Italics mine*)

This is a particularly calm and cool scene painting totally devoid of the melancholy and dark undertones and their corresponding colour as sign-codes, which envelop this book. The sudden splashes of colour in Krafchenko's life are however, only momentary without any hope of permanence.

The colour sign-code grey is used along with dark in *it's a lovers question* (159). The cat is described as grey in colour with white belly. The lines are highly suggestive of sexuality since cat image is often used to represent female sexuality:

out of nowhere
mmmrr rrrr
. . .cat leaps up on us
whiskers and nose (*wet on our face*)
blind in the *dark*
but you know she's there
grey with white belly
a small female cat . . . (*ibid. italics mine*)

The grey colour as sign-code here combines with dark to evoke the responses of mystery, enigma and apprehension about the unknown secrets of the female psyche and female sexuality. The leaping cat with a white belly and grey body is symbolic of the invasion of that which is normal and regular by the secret desires of sexuality. The colour white does not operate independently here, but combines with dark and grey to represent the nature of the female psyche (as also the human psyche in general) which is a mixture of dark, unknown desires and intentions and apparent, normal behaviour.

In this section *light headed* (165) the colour code-sign of green is used to create a vertigo effect:

. . .give me vertigo
vert I go green there I go again with
ascension those straight people
my legs dangling . . . (166 italics mine)

The vertigo effect is a physical state of dizziness. The colour green internalizes this vertigo effect in the physical state by evoking the corresponding emotional responses of confusion and bewilderment. Krafchenko visualizes himself as a great heron afloat in the sky:

. . .a great *blue*
heron with legs off the beach with . . . (ibid. italics mine)

The blue colour as sign-code evokes the responses of vastness and limitlessness and is usually associated with the vast, limitless sky arching over the Canadian Prairie. The huge heron with its blue coloured wings and body, seems to merge in the vast blue sky. The corresponding responses evoked in the reader are that of vastness and infinity. Cooley also makes use of animal imagery in *its a lovers question* (159). It is to be noted here that his imagery is conspicuous for the use of colours as sign-codes. In this poem *light headed* the idea of Krafchenko liberating himself from all bondage and captivity like a huge blue heron is symbolic of his urge to transcend all confinement.

The poem *hhggg as he stumbles* (171) reiterates the dark theme of Krafchenko's criminality and his bleak/dark future in these lines: 'but the dark under/ will not talk to him' (ibid italics mine). The idea of the darkness, which is uncontrollable and all penetrating, re-emphasizes itself. The colour dark evokes the corresponding emotional responses of mystery, hopelessness and impending death. However the dark atmosphere is apparently mitigated to a certain extent by the use of the colour yellow in

turning *yellow* eye out
cracked
yellow/eye turning
out (172 italics mine)

The yellow colour as sign-code here is the dismembered and sickening yellow of a cracked eye once again bringing about associations with dismembered and damaged human body. The apparent idea of the darkness being mitigated by yellow (which evokes responses of repulsion and nausea) is only a replaced by repulsion and nausea.

The use of the contrastive colour sign-codes of black and white in *what the crow really said* (176) in the sentence 'The *black* moustache sets off the white dentals eh' (ibid. italics mine) is evocative of the emotional response of laughter. Cooley here, tends to strike a lighter chord in the serious story of Krafchenko with dark character and fate. Cooley's deft use of the colour sign-codes of white and black and their inherent contradictions evokes the emotional responses of fun and laughter.

In *at the cage* the association of blue and yellow is remarkably different
a sleeve of sunshine
elbows through the window
swerves across the napkin

The contrast is between the colour black that evokes (in an underlying and ever present sense) the emotions of mystery, hopelessness, and fear of the unknown,. The colour sign-code orange of sunlight evokes the responses of brightness, pleasure and goodness. This contrast is made all the more prominent by the implied suggestion that all joys and pleasures of life have a core of sadness and mystery. The colour green evokes a sense of evil (in the traditional sense) associated with the cat image (linked to the cat as a symbol of the dark and of female sexuality in *it's a lovers question* (159) and is a part of the black, unknown and mysterious psyche of human mind. It reflects the evil nature of Krafchenko and his dark intentions. At this point Krafchenko is the evil representative of a dark world both within himself and of which he is a part. The recurrent use of dark as colour sign-code in *coming into morning coffee* (200-202) in lines such as 'out of dark/rows of spiced meat in dark colours' (201), emphasizes the inner dark core of both the book and its character Krafchenko. The following lines read:

. . . & the cloth on the table beside the lamp its
 rising like my mother's summer dough in the sun
 & the shine gone already
 from the *red* & the *green*
 soaking down into the table now
 chicken gravy running
 down the sides into the *dark*
dark brown in rest
 of room *brown* &
 bite of coffee
 sudden
cinnamon buns baking
 upon her sweat faint on
 her pillow the rumple of
 sweat-smell bends over our bed (201 italics mine)

The image of the mother is evoked through details of activities in the house which she used to engage herself in such as kneading dough and so on. The memory of the mother visualizes colour patterns associated with her image such as red, green, dark brown and cinnamon. These colours as sign-codes cumulatively evoke the perception of the mother, as an image constituted of colours. It is an association of colours, which evoke sense of pleasure tinged with melancholy (at her absence). The colour sign-codes red and brown of sunlight, the dark brown of chicken gravy, the brown of coffee and the light yellowish brown (cinnamon) coloured buns evoke not only the mother image but also the corresponding emotional responses of care, love and affection that epitomize the mother. Cooley succeeds in communicating the idea of the mother in her love, care and domestic activities at the level of visual perception of colours.

This particular usage of colours as sign-codes to evoke a perception of the mother is strategic in its placement before the description of Krafchenko's escape and his severe injury resultant from the fall. It brings about a yearning for the mother in an uncaring world of injury and pain. Though the poem structurally presents the fall as succeeding the evocation of the mother image, the lines: but there was an earlier

dream of dangling
 out on pipes hundreds
 of feet above a cement
 floor littered with pipes & valves
 dropped an egg spewed

like vomit all over the place (202 italics mine)

place the fall before the dream of the mother thematically and also hints at the same.

In the poem *expecting the sun*, the colour white evokes the emotional response of calm and peace and a feeling of lightness and weightlessness. The lines read thus:

. . . the moon
strolls slow
beside her

low inside her
like a *white*
foot
(floating) (205 italics mine)

The moon in all its calm, peace and tranquillity is internalized within 'her' and the emanating whiteness of the moonlight creates an effect of floating. A strange sensation of an existence, which is ecstatic, is produced. The colour sign-code white here evokes the corresponding emotions of ecstasy. This is a definite transition from an atmosphere of prevailing darkness, although only momentary.

The yellow shins (213) of the poem *in a darkroom* (ibid.) is evocative of a response of faint hope in a dark atmosphere. The colour yellow evokes the corresponding emotions of hope (though faint) and gradually vanishes into the tones of brown and dark in the succeeding lines. The idea suggested is that of Krafchenko's faint hope of eluding captivity after escaping which fades away with his injury and his subsequent arrest. Krafchenko's life like a dark room witnesses a vanishing, faint yellow light of hope and then there is an all enveloping darkness again.

The flashes of blue as colour sign-code in *once in a blue moon* (216) is evocative of the responses of nostalgia, reminiscences tainted with a faint emotion of melancholy for that which is lost. The memory of Benny is evoked through an atmosphere of blue melancholy. The totally contradictory scatological effect of 'blue' in *blue gas* is nauseating and as colour sign-code evokes responses of nausea and repulsion:

. . .we aghast what a gas
step what shaken when
Benny who wld have
guessed he had a ghost of a chance either
Benny a flaming asshole all right
In a burst of *blue* that phosphors the night
Benny lit Benny alight
his soul on fire
his eyes blue with ecstasy (217 italics mine)

The word ecstasy is 'his eyes blue with ecstasy' (ibid) is a sublime emotion derived, in this context, from a scatological effect. This leads to a mutual negation and thus destabilizes the readers from arriving any particular response emotionally.

The use of the colour green in *you are there* (228) in the sentence 'the young blond in *green* chords & dream' (ibid. italics mine) connects to the use of green colour as sign-code in *by the red* (234) in the sentence 'willows of *green* leaves'

(ibid. italics mine). It evokes emotions of naturalness in the latter. However, in the former, it evokes emotions of sexuality in the lines:

. . .bed yes make luv to'
the young blond in *green* cords & dream . . . (229 italics mine)

Dennis Cooley poetic technique as illustrated in *Bloody Jack* culminates in a strategy to decenter textual authority and present a discourse of multiple voices in the dialectical space of the text. *Bloody Jack* is a Menippea (Kristeva 65) of genreless genre. The discourse in *Bloody Jack* is a construct of inclusion as against exclusion. The effort is that of the blurring of margins separating different genres. His use of colour as sign-code also adopts this strategy of Menippea. The colours as sign-codes used in *Bloody Jack* create a Menippea of colours in order to enhance the post modernity of the text. Cooley's technique of presenting a Menippea of genreless genre is supported by a post-modernist use of colours as sign-codes representing Cooley's dynamics of composition.

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