

Letters

Editor, *Names*

Sir:

Gary S. Felton's note "On the Literary Use of Color Names: A Psycho-symbologic Approach" in the last issue of *Names* has intrigued me from the moment I read it. Is it a parody? The convoluted style, veiled references, and oddity of content make this credible. If it is meant seriously, however, may some comments on method be in order?

What Mr. Felton does is to list eleven principal colors (or "color forms," as he calls them) and to correlate them with personality traits and feeling tones – by what criteria we are not told. Of the 33 of these emotional correlates of color that he lists, 26 are on the dark side: words like gloomy, shame, anger abound. If you lean backward, you find seven that sound less forbidding – excited, moved, imperial, regal, chastity, free from stain, innocent – and you may not want to lean backward far enough to think of chastity as offering much cheer. It is an altogether dismal emotional world that we are asked to enter.

Why? What evidence does Mr. Felton offer to show that these emotions go with these colors? None. He claims that his is "the preferred context . . . as determined by lexical order-rule," but I have heard such popular identifications of colors with phenomena and emotions as the saying that green is spring and hope, red is fire and love, blue is heaven and faith. This is arbitrary, for sure, but so is Mr. Felton's catalog. I cannot see that it expresses anything but (always assuming he means it) his personal state of mind when he wrote it.

It should be possible to arrive at a more objective list by studying a representative sample of literature or by conducting psychological experiments to find what associations colors or names of colors actually evoke in people. Goldstein, Rorschach, and Schachtel, among others, have worked in that field.

Trying to view the issue in the colorful light of faith, hope, and charity, I would say that while the note published in *Names* has been thought-provoking, it takes charity to think of it as a work of scholarship; that I hope scientific studies will be made; and that I have faith they will bring results quite different from those presented to us.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Plank
(Cleveland, Ohio)

Editor, *Names*

Dear Sir,

I am pleased to learn of Dr. Plank's interest in my article and that he has found it thought-provoking. I wonder what kind of mood Dr. Plank was in when he composed his letter.

Sincerely,

Gary S. Felton
(Los Angeles)