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### Red Color Presentation in Shakespeare's Macbeth: Figurative and Pragmatic Study

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#### Abstract

One of the best tragedies, Macbeth is renowned for its creative consistency and compelling dramatic action. The fascination in the tragedy of Macbeth is the crime committed by a person whose extraordinary mental abilities, incredible bravery, and artistic imagination elevate the villainies above simple malice and provides the setting for an extraterrestrial clash of ideas and images. This study tries to highlight the use of color in Shakespeare's Macbeth while analyzing figurative language and pragmatic indications. This study comes to the conclusion that this work reflects Macbeth's mental state, his horror, and his fear. The phrase "bloody and invisible hand" brings to mind the moment

Macbeth realizes his crime: "bloody," and the sense that it is not being seen, "invisible." It is expressed through the recollection of a specific time period, twilight, when darkness is actively destroying and obliterating the day. It signifies that the world of evil will soon take control of it; "light thickens." This study also concludes that figurative language was presented in all red color and blood presentation of Macbeth. In addition, it is found that each presentation has a specific indication. Further studies are recommended in this regard to identify other color presentations in such plays and/or novels.

**Keywords:** Red Color, Blood, Macbeth, Figurative Language, Color Indications

#### 1. Introduction

Literature is seen to be as an imaginary product which reflects some real-life events. So, literature touches the real world we live in at all aspects. The author's power and influence are understood as decisive traits that add greatness to the literary work where his experience appears to help understanding the human situation. It will be perceived that no limitations on language which is used in literature when it is agreed that all aspects of human must be included in literature, (Greenblatt, 2012; Vermeule, 2010) <sup>[10, 28]</sup>. This illustrates how literature can depicts all life events and human races.

Literature is considered as an activity which is connected to language for employing it in a way which would represent reality in an imaginary frame (Short, 1989) <sup>[25]</sup>. In the same context, McRac (2008) <sup>[18]</sup> illustrates that literature is referred to as the capital letter "L" which embodies the text literariness. It is also the explanation of the used language and its context (Chapman, 1973). In addition, literature is thought to be as a way by which readers' appreciation of various organizations of the system language could be enhanced (Lazar, 2007). As a matter of fact, studying literature is an interaction between the reader and the writer. Rollin (1989) focuses on the importance of words for literature. He believes that literature is something recoverable and repeatable. He assures that literature must be durable and takes the form of a written text or a recorded utterance. He explains this idea in the following words:

"The word literature, I wish to argue, should be used to designate a certain body of repeatable or recoverable act of communication. Later on I shall collaborate on the certain part of the definition, which requires the exclusion of some repeatable recoverable communicative acts from the literary category." (Rollin, 1989)

The study of literature has always been deemed to be complex and unachievable (Lazar, 2007). This clarifies why literature has to be studied and explained from all its dimensions to make it accessible to students because of the growing interest of using literature in classroom. Moreover, Widdowson (1975) claims that the purpose of literature is to develop the individual's response ability to use language. Then, students who can maintain unique personal ideas are those who already have built awareness to literary discourse (Carter & McRac, 1999) <sup>[2]</sup>. On other words, literature is a mirror that reflects several aspects, such as social, political, cultural and economic situations in the place and time of producing it. The literary works talk to the authors' capacities to communicate social and political lessons and to give a clear representation of the time and place they live in, so it is vital to get it the time and setting of each work in this study to empower comprehension of the themes. Thus, it is

useful to consider that the aim of writing is to convey social and political issues and introduce clear pictures of the periods they live in. These lessons and pictures are embedded in their narratives. Hence, the researcher feels that it is so vital to appear the circumstances that might make the concept of red color in *Macbeth* is significant. Accordingly, this study aims to identify red color presentation in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* looking at figurative and pragmatic aspects.

## 2. Literature Review

Red is defined as "Having, or characterized by, the color which appears at the lower or least refracted end of the visible spectrum, and is familiar in nature as that of blood, fire, various flowers (as the poppy and rose) and ripe fruits (whence the frequent similes red as blood, fire, a rose, cherry, etc)." Red is used in different languages to express feelings or to associate cultural meaning. Therefore, red cultural associations might be a hard task due to cultural gaps which are caused by the lack of equivalence between two cultures. Arabic and English cultures exhibit some diverse associations in the use of red to indicate love, passion, danger, and so on (Janziz, 1997) <sup>[14]</sup>. The collocations of red are classified under categories as follows:

1. Red and Parts of the Body.
2. Red and Blood.
3. Red and Emotional/Moral Attitude.
4. Red and disease.
5. Red and other colors.
6. Red and nature. (Janziz, 1997, p.142) <sup>[14]</sup>

Red has negative and positive associations in the Arabic and English cultures use. Red has many positive uses in Arabic. For example, "الأحمران" "the red two [items]" could stand for gold and saffron, bread and meat, or bread and wine. Also, red is positively mentioned in the Quran:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا ۚ وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيَضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودَ ۚ (فاطر: 27).

"Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and we produce thereby fruits of varying colors? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black." (Sahih International, Chapter 35: 27). In English, red also has positive meanings, such as "Red tag sale" implies priced down. In addition, "Red letter day" means a memorable day. Also, "Paint the town red" means celebration. And "Red face" might imply blush (Spears, 2005, p. 552) <sup>[26]</sup>.

In addition, both cultures use red to indicate negative meanings such as anger, blood and fire. In the Arabic culture, red is associated with death. For example, the person who is going to be executed is dressed in red to indicate end of life. The perception of red by the two genders may be different, red clothes may be accepted by females and rejected by males. Also, in Arabic, there is the expression "العين الحمراء" "the red eye" is a sign of threat or power. The expression "الشمع الأحمر" "red wax" indicates the closure of law-violating shops or houses. Also, the expression "ليلة حمراء" "Red night" indicates pornographic night in both cultures. Furthermore, red person "الأحمر" indicates to weaponless person. "Red year" "سنة حمراء" means rainless year and "Red death" "الموت الأحمر" means

violent death (Ibn Manthour 1311: 990) <sup>[13]</sup>. In English, red is also associated with negative meanings. For instance, the expression "caught Red-handed" means "caught with non-refutable evidence" committing a crime. Moreover, and as in Arabic, the association of red with eye involves the emotional and inner feelings of hatred and fury. "Red face" may imply anger and bad temper. Also, "In the red" means in debt. "Red tape" refers to official routine or procedure. In addition, "Red herring" indicates to an unimportant matter (Spears, 2005: 552) <sup>[26]</sup>.

Red is one of the colors found in Shakespeare's works. For example, red in *Macbeth* relates to the face of the servant. When he tells *Macbeth* that there are ten thousand men coming to kill him, the servant is so scared, he is ghostly white. *Macbeth* gets mad at the servant for looking so scared and tells him "Go prick thy face and over-red thy fear" (*Macbeth*, 5.3.17-18.)

## 3. Macbeth Themes and Context

Any literary and theatrical text is concerned with studying the meaning through its indicative position within the context of the structure of the theatrical text and revealing the meaning generated from these states through the network of semantic as well as pragmatic relationships, which in its entirety form a synthetic unit that brings together the universal elements of the text through a web of contrasting relations between the elements of the text covering areas of interpretations in the content of the semantic and pragmatic text through a series of contrasts and contradictions of meaning.

That the door to entry to the semantic multiplicity of the text lies in its suggestive level, which opens towards the world then re-invests and employs it within the historical and human existence, and this pluralism allowed the text to converge on several meanings to become a center and object of interest generating a shift in the semantic meaning (Chollier, 2014; Ravizza, 2012) <sup>[4, 21]</sup>. For the text and how the meanings function within it, and the external structure that includes the social and psychological influences surrounding this text which, from Rawalan Barth's point of view, in which text represents a tapestry of coordinated vocabulary, and is part of a group of concepts that form signs, and it is the indicative materialistic container, and its concept is linked to the metaphysics of reality. Also, it is seen to be the formal collective reality of linguistic phenomena, and it is a function of special status in semiotics and text through its dramatic detail, a creative field to redistribute language according to several meanings, all of which turn into symbols with which the human being coexists and becomes for him ideas characterized by becoming and continuity and is more like a continuous semantic piece of music (Salem, 2014).

The level of semantic functioning in the theatrical, as well as literary text and its semiotic formation, worked during the text in activating the mind of the recipient in the case of distant reading to the state of close reading through which he becomes a critic, participant, and actor in it a method expression so that this text is liberated and becomes a semiotic image visible through interpretive reading in the semantic work cycle, turning into a revealing linguistic code that activates the distinctive communicative message in linguistic, cultural, and sociological contexts, as there is no communication through signs without the intention behind the act of communication, and without creativity or at least

without tag synthesis (Al-qadi & Naser, 2022) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The structure of the Shakespearian text is one of the forms of textual structures belonging to the relationships of absence in which the symbol carries a meaning and an idea that the event crystallizes within bilateral relations between the signifier and the signified ones and clarifies the psychology of the theatrical character and reveals its internal crisis that explodes events based on a central focus whose axis represents ammunition within the human psyche from here emerges the significance of Shakespeare's works.

As texts with open connotations, the reason is the breadth of life in those texts, which are dealt with in their basic foundations through semantic stations and signs that imprint his society in the model that applies to all human societies (Chollier, 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>. Shakespeare was able to discuss life with social and psychological signs that constitute the constants of human existence, between power, fall, courage, and jealousy. Skepticism contained them all in order to present to us in his text the holistic view of the human condition, and then the interpretation with which he armed towards this text that a diligent reader of Shakespeare can raise some of the rhetorical combinations of dialogues that he thinks burden reading or presentation, but he does not progress towards the details of action and movement To stand up to the appropriate interpretation of the meaning contained in these details (Glidden, 2017; Sheinberg, 2017) <sup>[9, 23]</sup>.

It is found that Macbeth does not stop at the boundaries of the text in terms of being men of authority but turns into a social scientist full of proposition to the supreme authority, which turns into an act to affirm this ambition, and from here begins Shakespeare in his masterpiece from a basic principle which is the progressive man who feels he is strange from this world, the tragedy of abstinence lies in the intensification of its unity, and the resulting sense of total meaninglessness overwhelms it after it finally breaks the last ties between it and between society and humanity (Glidden, 2017; Sheinberg, 2017) <sup>[9, 23]</sup>.

Blood (Red Color) symbolizes murder and guilt, and his portraits concern both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. For example, before killing Duncan, Macbeth hallucinates a bloody dagger indicating the king's room. After committing the murder, he was horrified, and said, "Will the great ocean of Neptune wash this clean blood from my hand? Banquo's ghost, seen during a banquet, displays "bloody locks". Blood also symbolized Macbeth himself accepting his guilt. He said to Lady Macbeth, "I'm in Stepless blood yet, should I not go any further, / going back was boring as going." The blood also affects Mrs. Macbeth, who, in the sleepwalking scene, wants to clean the blood from her hands. For Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, blood shows that the path of their guilt runs in opposite directions: Macbeth turns from being guilty to a ruthless killer, while Lady Macbeth, who starts out as more assertive than her husband, is plagued with guilt and eventually kills herself.

#### 4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design. Creswell (2012: 621) <sup>[5]</sup> defines the qualitative approach as "an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon." Thematic analysis is an explanatory study that deals with complex materials or languages. It usually answers questions rather than testing hypotheses. According to Chepp and Gray (2014) <sup>[3]</sup>, qualitative research answers the question of how and why things happen. So that

it gives us a deeper understanding of the object being sought and rather than simply a glance (Chepp & Gray 2014; Naser & Hamzah, 2018) <sup>[3, 20]</sup>. Accordingly, this study employed thematic analysis approach to analyze red color presentations.

### 5. Analysis and Discussion

#### 5.1 Figurative Language Categories

There are different types of figurative language or tropes in which the meaning of an expression deviates from its normal literal pattern. For example, metaphor is a figurative language type (Cuddon, 1992) <sup>[6]</sup> where speakers say something to mean something else. For instance, the expression "warm relations" is seen as a metaphorical expression which means good relations. The present study has indicated to several figurative language aspects including: allusion, metaphor, imagery, euphemism, alliteration, symbolism, metonymy, supernatural, and irony (See Appendix A)

#### Allusion

Allusion is known to be a statement used to bring something to mind without overtly expressing it; a fleeting or oblique reference (e.g., Harte, 2019) <sup>[11]</sup>

For example,

(1)

"Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?"

This expression is seen to be included into allusion language aspect. It is used to present an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference.

(2)

"Go prick thy face and over red thy fear thou lily-livered boy"

The allusion language aspect indicates a coward boy. This is not clearly shown in the example, it should be understood.

#### Imagery

Imagery is a literary device in which figurative language is used to elicit a sensory experience or to paint a picture with words for the reader (Yaito, & Termjai, 2021) <sup>[29]</sup>.

For example,

(1)

"The fountain of your blood is stopped"

Item (1) of this category points out to the imagery drawing a picture for readers.

In addition, looking at the imagery aspect indicating to vengeful blood, it can be observed that it is not reflected in the original text. Indeed, it is meant in this expression to indicate to the following point.

The image of blood is to illustrate changes in Macbeth's character throughout the play. At the beginning of the play, blood is used to represent Macbeth's loyalty and honor as a soldier. As the play progresses, he becomes a treacherous person, betraying King Duncan and murdering him. The blood now is associated with murder and Macbeth's treason. Towards the end of the play, the image of blood shows the unending guilt of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

#### Euphemism

Euphemism is figurative language that is used to replace harsh, disrespectful, or unpleasant language. As a manner of softening the effect of what is being conveyed, this literary

device allows someone to say what they mean indirectly rather than using literal words (Meswanti, 2022) <sup>[19]</sup>.

For example,

(1)

There's no such thing. It is the bloody business which informs thus\* to mine eyes.

Item (1) is related to euphemism as it presents killing as a business by saying bloody business as it stands for murder.

### Symbolism

Symbolism is a literary device in which words, persons, signs, places, or abstract concepts are used to signify something other than their literal meaning (Syafitri, & Marlinton, 2018) <sup>[27]</sup>.

For example,

(1)

“What bloody man is that?”

Item (1) of this category has symbolic meaning, more deeply, blood is one of honor, and it occurs when Duncan sees the injured sergeant and says "What bloody man is that? This is symbolic of the brave fighter who been injured in a valiant battle for his country.

### Supernatural

The supernatural genre incorporates elements that cannot be understood by science and operates outside the rules of the real world (Eubanks, 2018).

For example,

(1)

My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain

Item (1) carries a supernatural language figure as it indicates something beyond logic.

### 5.2 Indications of Red and Blood

Huber (1983) <sup>[12]</sup> (as cited in Finnear, 2020) <sup>[8]</sup> states that blood has various indications in *Macbeth*. Consider these two expressions (i) “It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood and (ii) The fountain of your blood is stopped have indicated to revenge as being vengeful blood.”

This study has found several red and blood meaning indications such as brave blood, imagined blood, guilty blood, noble blood, paranoid blood, vengeful blood, and hysterical blood (See Appendix B)

### Brave Blood

The expression ‘brave blood’ indicates the overuse of killing and the ability to show him as a knight who can revenge and take an action

For example,

(1)

“Go prick thy face and over-red thy fear, Thou lily-livered boy”.

### Guilty blood

This expression means that how individuals are being guilty of many killing sins bearing of blood on hands.

For example,

(1)

“Making the green one, red”.

This expression presented in item (1) presents a metaphorical indication ‘guilty blood.’ It is highlighted as that metaphor is a linguistic instrument utilized to overcome the ambiguous meaning of idea. More specifically, the

metaphor function in language is to “furnish the realization of linguistic for the activity of cognitive via a speaker who utilizes a single linguistically articulated area to earn a grasp of another conceptual or experiential field, as well likeness, which a listener understands such comprehension” (Kittay 1987) <sup>[15]</sup>.

### Noble blood

Noble blood refers to a hereditary elite with unique social or political position, which is commonly traced back to the feudal era (Manolov, 2021) <sup>[17]</sup>.

For example,

(1)

“His silver skin laced with his golden blood”

### Paranoid blood

This expression describes Macbeth who becomes paranoid, brutal, and mentally insane when more killing has happened in the novel.

For example

(1) “There’s blood upon thy face.”

### Vengeful blood

This expression means vengeance for bloodshed requires bloodshed in return.

(1) It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood.

### Hysterical blood

It indicates suffering of Macbeth because of hysteria and hallucinates of Banquo's ghost with blood-clotted hair.

(1) Here’s the smell of the blood still.

## 6. Conclusion

Red color could symbolize places, people, ideas, events, relationships, or objects. Red, which is sometimes represented with blood, is a commonly used symbol. Blood and red are used to represent murder and guilt in *Macbeth*, and Shakespeare employs this image to describe Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Blood is one of the most prominent motifs in *Macbeth*, as blood in the play is seen to be indicating how “Shakespeare has indeed plotted a rather sanguinary path of disintegration for an initially respected and honorable individual, and it is through the extensive use of blood imagery that Macbeth’s end is made the more horrific” (Huber, 1983) <sup>[12]</sup>. It is also concluded that red color and blood indicated to many figurative language meaning that as Macbeth’s play has many social and political message to send them to readers. Undoubtedly, Shakespeare’s characters attempt to ‘read’ the faces and figures of others. Indeed, Macbeth’s ‘face is a book’, where ‘strange matters’ might be read (Edwards, 2016) <sup>[7]</sup>. This study recommends further studies regarding literary indications of well-known literary pieces.

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